The future of electronic entertainment issue#112

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E3 special: Legend of Zelda, Doom III, Blinx, Super Mario Sunshine, Panzer Dragoon Orta, Metroid Prime, Stuntr… TimeSplitters2, Burno… MGS2 Substance, Fa… Silent Hill 3, The Geta… The making of Spacew…

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Class of 2002

Edge selects those most likely to succeed from this year's E3 show





How quickly we forget. Only 12 months ago the industry was still neck deep in a difficult transitional period indisputably aggravated by publishers' obsessive 'quantity over quality' release ethos of the late '90s which saw a market-damaging abundance of lifeless, clichéd titles. Yet at this year's Electronic Entertainment Expo many seemed happy to party like it's 1999.

Even with fewer publishers present there were too many games. Worse, a disheartening proportion were mostly indistinguishable 'me too' titles. Their collective quality may have been higher than that of previous years but it was nevertheless distressing to realise that precious little appears to have been retained from the last hardware transition. Not least the fact that the market has clearly demonstrated that it will not tolerate an attack of the clones.

Still, a selection of individuals stood above this army of creative echoes and you shouldn't have too much trouble singling these out from this month's substantial Prescreen section which has been entirely dedicated to E3 coverage (and starts on p32).

Admittedly, looking at previous shows this year's was actually quite good. It's just that **Edge** had hoped that E3 2001 titles such as *Ico* and *Frequency* had signalled a brave new direction for the industry. Instead, it would appear developers think it too much work (or are unable) to put some thought into what they produce.

Still, it's promising to see some continue to look forward to the challenge. "The higher the waves, the bigger the fun," **Shigeru Miyamoto** told **Edge** at E3, summing up his attitude to the pressure of having to ensure the implementation of innovative ideas in every game he produces. But if this year's E3 is any indication, he seems to be one of the very few who can swim.



Features





E3 Prescreens























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The 'must build time machine' issue





















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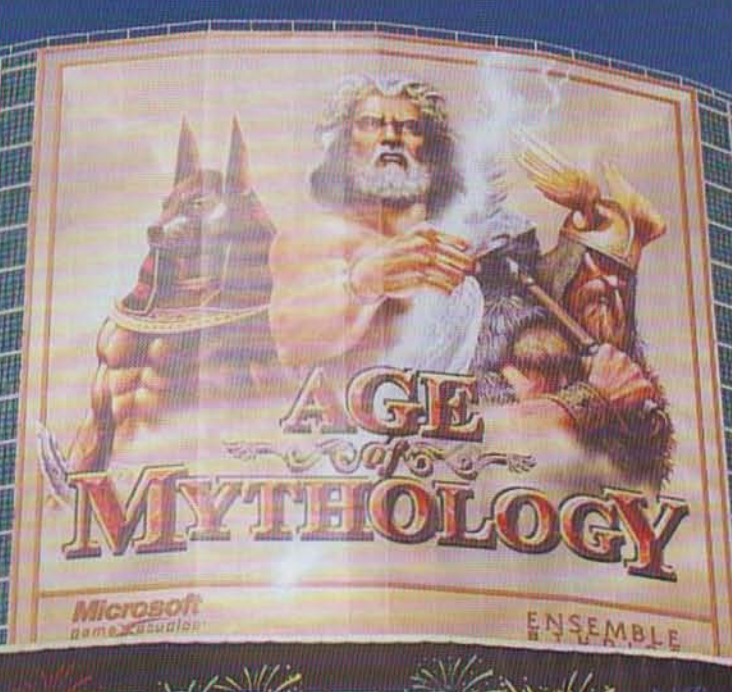
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Big three go head to head at E3

The biggest show on the videogame calendar indicates fecund times for the industry, but suffers from a pronounced bout of sequelitis

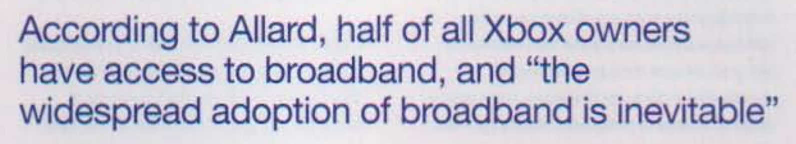
Over its eight-year history, the Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) has evolved into the biggest event in the videogame industry calendar, housing big-booth showcases of the current cutting edge, while providing behind-closed-doors opportunities that shape future release schedules. This year's event, held at the Los Angeles Convention Center in California, proved no different, with the big three console manufacturers vying for (online) supremacy and thirdparty publishers – including ex-console manufacturer Sega – displaying an impressive line-up of forthcoming gaming software. Significantly, the exhibition provided evidence of an industry apparently reinvigorated after the last couple of lean, transitional, years. And as ever it was also characterised by a proliferation of money-grabbing tat and attention-grabbing booth babes.

10.00am, Monday May 20, Capcom Press Conference, Westin Bonaventure Hotel: Capcom is the first company to take advantage of the conglomeration of the world's videogaming media, organising a press conference in the rather sci-fi surroundings of the Westin Bonaventure Hotel. Q&A sessions with the company's producers emphasise the company's cross-platform release strategy, and prompt conspiratorial laughter as questions from the floor pre-empt later announcements by Microsoft and Sony. The PAL version of *Onimusha 2* will benefit from a 60Hz mode, we are told, and the first teaser trailer for *Devil May Cry 2* is unveiled. *Red Dead Revolver* goes down particularly well with US journalists but the real highlights are *Resident Evil 0* (p36) and *Steel Battalion* (p70).

2.30pm: *Steel Battalion* producer Atsushi Inaba's personal demonstration of the game's enormous controller causes a bit of a stir, giving a hint of the positive reception it will receive at the show itself.

3.00pm, Monday May 20, Microsoft Press Conference, The Orpheum Theatre: Crowds begin to mill around outside The Orpheum Theatre in anticipation of Microsoft's official unveiling of its online strategy. Like LA's many bars and clubs, entry requires photo ID and plenty of queuing to get in. Branded Xbox jeeps and a growing number of complimentary coaches add to the chaos, which is barely kept in check by a sizeable LAPD presence.

4.00pm: The doors are finally opened, allowing entry into The Orpheum's rococo interior, which is bathed in an Xbox-green glow. A fairly significant Sega contingent – including Yuji Naka – takes its place alongside notable US and European developers at the front of the auditorium. Free popcorn is given out, and female ushers are subject to an unwarranted amount of photographic attention – a trend that will continue during the three days of the show proper.


According to Allard, half of all Xbox owners have access to broadband, and "the widespread adoption of broadband is inevitable"

5.00pm: A wait of nearly two hours proves slightly soporific for jet-lagged journalists, but as is usual with these events, Microsoft has scattered hired clappers around the auditorium to lead applause – including a particularly loud chap sitting two rows behind **Edge** – which ensures that everybody is suitably buoyant when ToeJam and Earl finally introduce **Robbie Bach** onto the stage. Bach commences his presentation with a new corny catchphrase: "Xbox has more momentum, sooner, than any other gaming platform." He continues with a stat-attack that focuses on the console's attach rate and North American sell-through to emphasise the platform's viability. "At least one thing should be clear," he declares: "Xbox is here to stay."

5.10pm: Ed Fries, introduced by the characters from *Brute Force*, is, as usual, keen to stress the importance to Microsoft of developers themselves, stating, "Our challenge is to raise development into an art form." He goes on to single out three Xbox-exclusive titles: *Blinx* ("The first 4D character platform game," – p50); *Star Wars Knights of the Old Republic* (p35); and *Panzer Dragoon Orta* (p59). A teaser trailer follows, giving a glimpse of some of the 300 Xbox games that are in development. Fries reveals that by Christmas, there will be 200 games available to play on Xbox.

5.20pm: A video interview, with Lionhead's Peter Molyneux and Team Ninja's Tomonubu Itagaki, gives a hint of what is to come after Christmas: teaser footage of *Fable* (formerly *Project Ego* – see **E**111), *DoA Xtreme Beach Volleyball* and *Ninja Gaiden* is shown. After the video, Fries finishes by asserting Microsoft's commitment to bringing existing franchises online...

5.25pm: Which segues nicely into **J Allard**'s presentation of Microsoft's online service offering, called Xbox Live. After a brief outline of the Xbox utopian online vision, he hands over to a cheesy, though entertaining, ESPN video, depicting NFL stars Peyton Manning and Matt Hasselbeck competing over the Xbox Live service. Allard continues by furnishing some finer details: "It's 100 per cent broadband, for the ease of connection, the speed of gameplay, the voice communication, the content downloading and sharing that only broadband and a hard disk can support," he reveals. According to Allard, half of all Xbox owners already have access to broadband (no doubt many of them in the US), and "the widespread adoption of broadband is inevitable."

5.30pm: Yet another video, this time of "the online visionaries that are going to take gaming to the future" – the creators of online titles such as *Star Wars Galaxies*, *Phantasy Star Online*, *Unreal Championship*, *Halo* and *Counter-Strike* all prove willing to lend their endorsement to Microsoft's approach. That approach is characterised by a holistic philosophy: "We've laid the groundwork and we've built the infrastructure," declares Allard. "We provide the hosting, the networking, the bandwidth, the security, the billing, the operations and all of the rest, so that the developers of great games can focus on one thing: creating

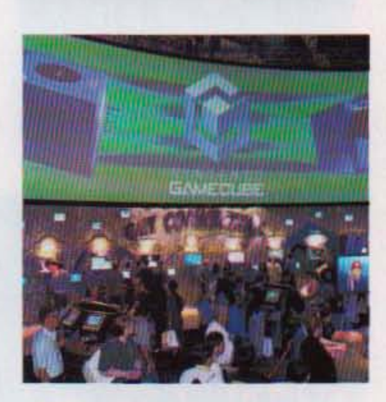




Although *Devil May Cry 2* (left) impressed with its rooftop environments and teased with footage of a new playable character. *Brute Force* (right) on Xbox wasn't as impressive







The three console manufacturers each had a postive show, demonstrating a strong software line-up for every platform in coming months, while Sony and Microsoft also announced details of their bid for domination of the online space

amazing games." This outlook is later to contrast with Sony's online strategy. Allard goes on to reveal that the service will launch, globally, in autumn 2002, with US Xbox owners benefiting from a one-year subscription and starter kit for $49.99 (£35). Off the record UK broadband service providers later prove sceptical of Microsoft's ability to deliver on time.

5.45pm: Robbie Bach returns to the stage to wrap up the Microsoft presentation. He signs off by announcing that the company has earmarked $2 billion over the next five years, for Xbox Live and "the continued development of the Xbox platform," (which sounds suspiciously like Xbox 2 to **Edge**).

8.00am, Tuesday May 21, SCEA Press Conference, Los Angeles Centre Studios: Under the gaze of banners promoting the new US PlayStation brand campaign, "Live in Your World, Play in Ours", the crowds assemble in the early morning sun for SCEA's pre-E3 briefing. Coffee and breakfast buffets make up for initial queues outside a venue whose warehouse chic and mosaic screens contrast with the ornate interior of Microsoft's chosen venue.

9.00am: As the lights dim, SCEA president **Kaz Hirai** takes to the stage, introducing guest of honour, Ken Kutaragi. Once again the presentation commences with a host of statistics, like the 30m PlayStation2 units shipped by the end of May 5, and 160m PlayStation2 games sold by March 31. The message is very much one of continued market dominance and expertise borne from experience, with a consequent ability to deliver revenue opportunities to thirdparty developers, and a diverse range of software to consumers. According to Hirai, "The console war is over." It simply remains to confirm the US PS2 price cut (from $300 to $200), and announce that *GTAIII*, which continues to sell in substantial numbers, has been tied to a four-year exclusivity deal.

9.20am: Hirai turns his attention to new firstparty titles, such as *Ratchet & Clank* and *The Mark of Kri*. Team Soho's Brendan McNamara is invited on stage to introduce *The Getaway*. A slightly less bombastic and overlong presentation than the day's other speakers displays a slightly embarrassing reliance on hackneyed cockney phraseology. The game itself looks like it still needs some work (p63).

9.35am: Hirai returns to the stage to present details of SCEA's online strategy. In contrast to Microsoft, Sony's approach is to devolve the majority of decisions to developers (and indeed consumers, who are free to choose their own ISP). Publishers and developers can choose their own server technology and technical standards. Sony will be providing financial incentives to thirdparties who commit to the service, which will launch in August this year. Significantly, Sony's Network Adaptor is compatible with both broadband and narrowband, and will come bundled with a Start-Up Disk that provides technical guidance as well as playable demos. The service will be supported by several high profile titles, including *EverQuest*, *Final Fantasy XI*, *Resident Evil Online* and *TimeSplitters2*.

9.45am: EA's president and ardent Xbox critic, John Riccitiello, arrives to unveil the PlayStation2-exclusive *Madden NFL 2003 Online*. The arrival of Daunte Culpepper on stage, and Jevon Kearse and John Madden himself via satellite link rather upstages Microsoft's own online NFL demonstration the previous day, and proves to be the high point of the press conference.

10.30am, Tuesday May 21, E3 Nintendo Press Conference, The Regal Biltmore Hotel: Edge arrives at the now traditional E3 home of Nintendo to find a sea of 'journalists' clogging up the press registration area as the conference hall has yet to open its doors. When the doors do open, it's clear that the event is significantly over-subscribed.

10.48am: Peter MacDougall, NoA's executive vice president, takes to the stage. He talks of the GameCube situation in Europe as maintaining a "healthy momentum" after selling 450,000 units in two weeks. "These are real numbers," he added - dig at Microsoft's claim of 500,000 European unit sales the company had made the previous day. He then focuses on Nintendo's E3 presence and describes the line-up as possibly the best ever from the company while also promising that the next nine months will see more games releases than for any previous Nintendo console (in the US at least).

10.51am: Satoru Iwata, having now taken over from Hiroshi Yamauchi at NCL, then runs through various recently signed deals, namely: its association with Namco, the Triforce arcade board (see **E**109), the *Biohazard* exclusivity agreement and Square's return to Nintendo hardware.

10.55am: MacDougall returns to the stage for a brief introduction to the E3 video. *Metroid Prime* opens the footage and the crowd, predictably, explodes into action despite the fact that on the conference room projector the colours look washed out and initially the action appears mostly uninspiring (p56).

Resident Evil 0 (p36), displaying some superb lighting effects, follows and appropriately leads a near-finished *Eternal Darkness* (p57). These, according to MacDougall, are the "Game Giants" - games that you won't find on other systems and this year's Nintendo E3 theme.

11.03am: Of course, Nintendo isn't simply GameCube. With the excited crowd still high from the first video, tape two, showcasing the company's GBA line-up, kicks off. Glimpses of *Metroid Fusion*, *Game & Watch 4*, *A Link to the Past*, *Golden Sun*, *Yoshi's Island* and Rare's *Disney Magical Quest* are enough to keep the excitement going.

11.05am: Iwata-san returns to talk about the uniqueness of the GC/GBA connectivity hoping it



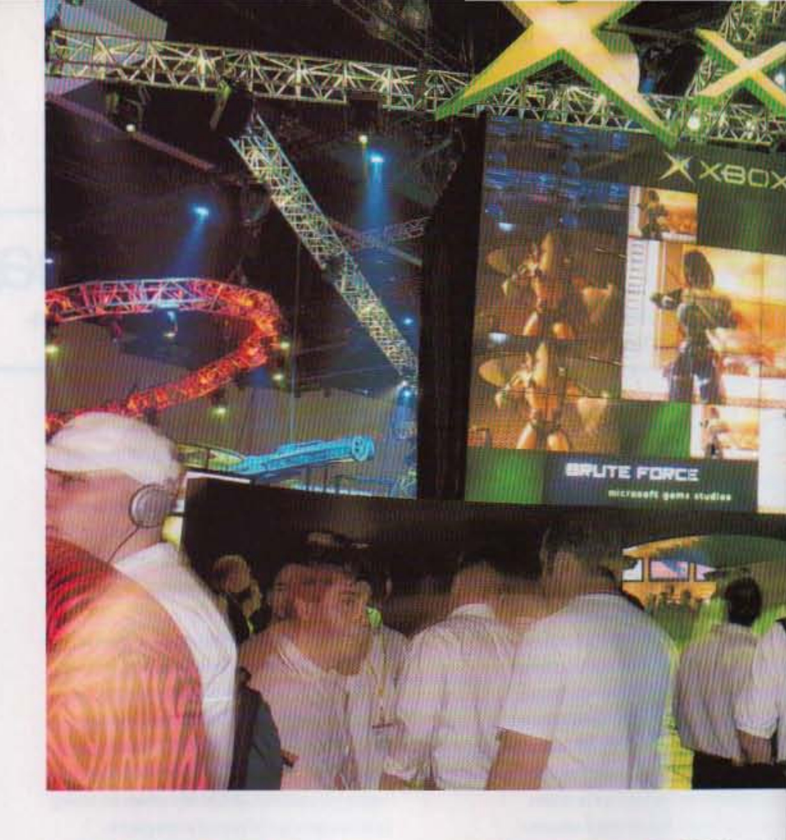


EA's stand stood out in terms of sheer audio volume, though it also impressed by showing off a sizeable roster of commercially heavyweight titles – and indeed some genuinely entincing games





Microsoft's presence at the show banished memories of last year's stuttering performance, thanks to a diverse selection of quality software – though not all of it commercially viable





SCEA's message is one of continued dominance and expertise borne from experience. According to Kaz Hirai, "The console war is over"

will mask the company's few details regarding its online plans – issues involving userbase and profit-generation remain, but at least there will be no licensing fees charged for thirdparty online games.

11.07am: As the perfect example of connectivity between Nintendo hardware, the US advert for *Animal Crossing* is shown. While informative, it is quite easily one of the most vomit-inducing pieces of game-related marketing **Edge** has seen in a while.

11.11am: Clearly still able to control his thoughts despite the mind-numbing commercial that has just aired, Iwata-san introduces two new peripherals: a motion sensor which when plugged in to the GBA allows you to use it as a controller; and Game Eye, a camera with which to digitise your face into games.

11.14am: MacDougall then focuses on *Star Fox Adventures* (p57) before launching another video. *Mario Party 4*, *1080° White Storm* and *Wario World* stand out as the highlights. Hotel security stubbornly clears a passageway through the crowd prompting **Edge** to suspect Miyamoto-san (conspicuously absent from the proceedings up to this point) is planning a different stage approach this year.

11.20am: Charming *Super Mario Sunshine* (p55) footage appears and the crowd, that had admittedly lost some of its earlier momentum, wakes up.

11.22am: And sure enough, **Shigeru Miyamoto** makes his way to the stage from the back of the room, while playing the E3 *Sunshine* code via a Wavebird controller. He shows off some of the new moves, puts the controller down and...

11.26am: ... goes on to show off *Legend of Zelda*. Given the reaction, this is what the audience had been saving their energy for but as soon as the cel-shading appears you can almost hear a collective – and depressing – sigh of disappointment.

11.34am: "But this isn't the only Zelda game I have brought with me today," Miyamoto-san announces to the absolute delight of the largely American attendance that apparently assumes some sort of photorealistic version is in development at NCL. Again, the collective disappointment is almost tangible as Mario's inventor grabs a GBA. The subsequent scene, however, is most entertaining. Having announced that the GBA Zelda game includes a fourplayer mode for which he'll require audience participation in order to properly demonstrate, more excitable elements in the crowd fall over themselves and run to the front of the stage desperate to be selected only to realise Miyamoto-san was in fact referring to representatives from Namco, Capcom and Amusement Vision. It's a great image but it's a little disappointing that there will apparently be no cooperative run through the main quest, with a simplistic competitive style play on purpose built maps instead.

11.37am: Nagoshi-san stays on stage to present a rolling demo of *F-Zero*. It looks early and a little bland but crucially, hardly shows anything at all. The only notable feature is that the pilots inside the cockpit appear fully animated.

11.40am: MacDougall returns one more time to reinforce the 'Game Giants' message and kick off one final video reel – this time a medley of Nintendo's E3 line-up. A Q&A session follows where very little of interest is said, apart perhaps for the fact that five *Biohazard* titles are planned for the GC (none expected to offer online options for the time being). But by this point the same 'journalists' who were so keen to get in at the start of the conference are even keener to get hold of the free Nintendo bags being handed out in the reception area.

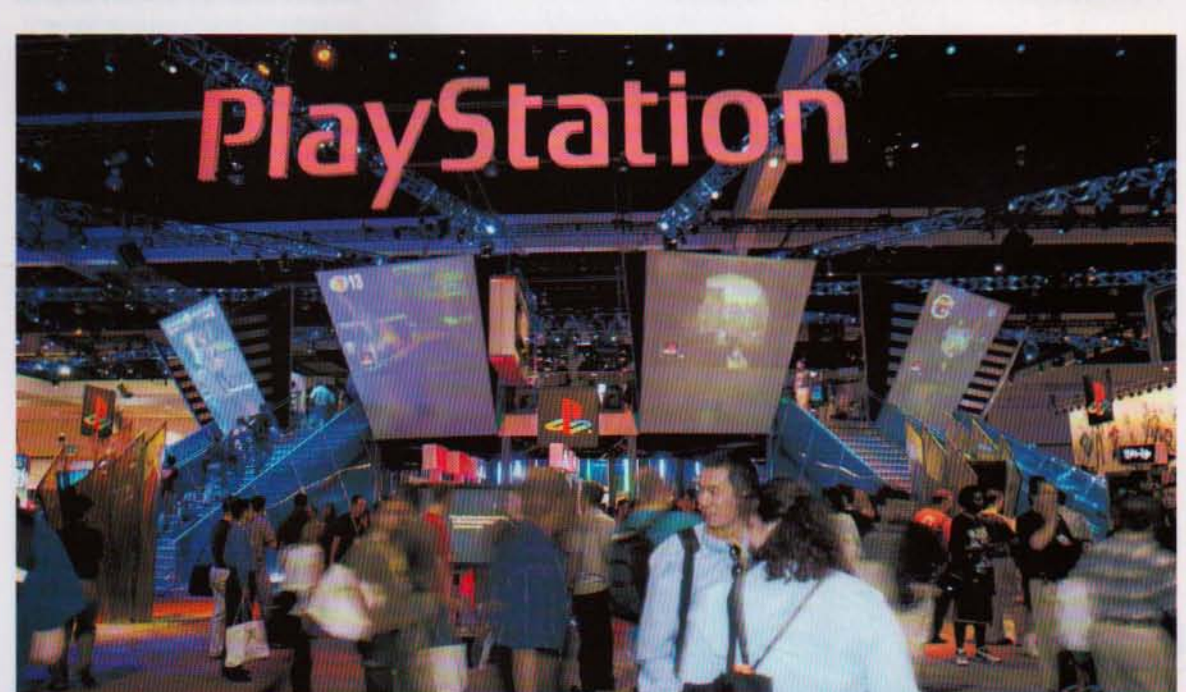
12.20pm, Tuesday May 21, E3 SCEE Press Conference, Los Angeles Centre Studios: To the shock of LA's inhabitants (and most US journalists, for that matter), **Edge** walks back to the location of the morning's SCEA conference for the European update. Again, some queuing is endured but before long most liggers are amorously handling the micro digital camera that comes attached to the event pass – the show has yet to start but already the thinking is that no other free gift will come close to this. An agreeable lunch proves a good time to catch up with familiar faces – between the starter and one of the main courses **Edge** spots Evolution Studio's Martin Kenwright who reveals one or two aspects of his studio's new *WRC* venture, though sadly off the record. Equally controlled is Free Radical Design's Karl Hilton whose *TimeSplitters2* (p40) **Edge** would go on to greatly enjoy in multiplayer mode.

1.45pm: Having persuaded the media to stop eating and ushered them into the nearby Texas-sized gazebo, the proceedings begin with a promotional video to get the crowd in the mood. Sony's F1 game stands out, if only for featuring one of the Arrows drivers on the top step of the podium



For the first time in two years, Konami's stand actually didn't feel claustrophobic





The main thrust of SCEA's message seemed to be the revenue opportunities that its market dominance ensures for thirdparty publishers. SCEE was more bullish about the actual content available on PlayStation2, though titles such as *The Getaway* weren't entirely convincing



Nintendo's stand was easily the most oversubscribed at the show, with lengthy queues attesting to a reassuringly predictable first rate selection of software

but impressive showings from *Ratchet & Clank* and *Primal* must also be singled out.

1.50pm: David Reeves, senior vice president of sales and marketing shows up to give a quick business update. With 102 PAL territories (compared to 88 in 2001), sales of PSone have reached 27m in western Europe and continue to sell at 30,000 units per week. The games catalogue now hovers around the 1,300 mark and a 7.2:1 software to hardware ratio exists. A new Platinum price is announced – €19.95 (from €29.95). And to reinforce the message for those that are sat thinking PSone has had its day, Reeves points out that more firstparty software will be released this year than last.

On to PS2 and Reeves proudly announces global shipments of 30m, with 7.26m installed in PAL homes where the machine is (at the time of writing) selling at 70,000 a week. The inevitable (and ultimately meaningless) comparison with the uptake rate of the original PS is made and we learn that its successor is currently trebling the installation figures. The current software/hardware ratio stands at 4.2:1 but is growing and 265 games are already available for the 128bit system (85 per cent from thirdparties). By March next year, this figure is expected to reach 409 titles with a 13.5m Euro installed base.

Back in the present, Reeves discloses some insight into the typical PS owner. The average age of the PS2 gamer is now 25 years (modal age is 14 years) which compares with 18 (and 12) for PSone.

2.11pm: Reeves then moves to the marketing solutions SCEE plans to implement over the coming months. First and foremost is the *FFX* bundle which is followed by the announcement that the coloured set of PS2s unveiled in Japan last year are to become available to the European public as a limited special edition. The PS2 Linux kit (p16) should be available as you read this and the broadband service is scheduled for the end of October. Finally, details of a new consumer show, The PS Experience, scheduled to run from August 29-31 at Earl's Court, are revealed.

2.15pm: Phil Harrison, SCEE's senior vice president of development, then steps onto the stage and boldly announces: "One year from now I won't be working in the videogame business anymore," – referring, of course, to what he terms 'The Entertainment Revolution', a hybrid form of movies, music and games that extends beyond what is currently thought of as a videogame. He goes on to introduce first and secondparty talent that SCEE regards as the driving force behind this revolution. Among them, Martin Kenwright, Mark Cerny (Cerny Games), Ted Price (Insomniac), and Brendan McNamara (Studio Soho) to name but four.

2.21pm: To prove his point, Harrison ends with the live action video of *The Getaway*, shown earlier at the SCEA conference. This leaves a few confused but many more frustrated as they keep expecting the video to cut to the game at key points. Furthermore, having not played the game by this stage, most in the crowd don't realise the same sequences can be found in-game as part of the game engine-generated cut-scenes and therefore fail to see the relevance. It's a small faux pas in an otherwise interesting presentation, even if **Edge** finds it difficult to subscribe to Harrison's vision of the industry in a year's time.

2.25pm: It's SCEE president Chris Deering's turn. He begins by tackling the European specifics of Sony's PS2 online plans. He highlights the complexity of the European market when it comes to establishing a continental broadband service that players across the Atlantic (where uptake rates and services are naturally more standardised) don't have to face. He talks of new experiences for the consumer, namely in the form of a PS2 broadband magazine that would deliver demo downloads, a music jukebox, instant messaging, secure CD ripping, online browsing, video on demand, video PVR functions (archive digital photos/mpegs), voice communication and of course, network gaming. Few of these will be free and paying for services is t[o] be done securely, with numerous precautions in place, such as the serialisation of disks, CPU-addressability, password checks and the potential use of a memory card as a dongle. Deering rapidly adds that this system will work in synergy with the existing retail model and that a partnership with networks and ISPs is obviously required while also ensuring profitability for all participants.

2.43pm: Deering then turns to the future, reiterating Reeves' earlier prediction that the PS2 market is on course to more than double its current user base by March 2003; that the current home gaming market will repeat the historical generation growth already







Legend of Zelda **in GBA and GC guises eventually got great receptions from the press with the US reporters now capable of accepting the fact that the cel-shading of the latter is here to stay. On the same stand, *Metroid Prime* convincingly eased fears that things weren't well**

seen with PSone; and that the traditional disk-based business is expected to grow through to 2005, possibly beyond.

2.49pm: SCEE's president finishes off his presentation by reading out a (seemingly never ending) list of PS2 exclusives and forthcoming Platinum range titles.

2.10pm, Tuesday May 21, Koei Press Conference, The Regal Biltmore Hotel: Microsoft's Ed Fries joins Koei's Chairman and CEO, Keiko Erikawa, and producer Kou Shibusawa, to discuss its attempt to break into the US and European markets. *Crimson Sea* – a new, Xbox-exclusive, title – is unveiled, demonstrating the company's characteristic preponderance of onscreen opponents. *Dynasty Warriors 3* is announced for Xbox while *Dynasty Tactics* (PlayStation2) and *Mystic Heroes* (GameCube) are also showcased.

6.00pm, Thursday May 23, Sega VIP event, Los Angeles Convention Center: As the West Hall of the Convention Center is closed to the public, Sega's stand remains open to invitees, who are treated to drinks and canapés.

6.20pm: As the Sega booth fills to capacity, Sega of America COO and president, Peter Moore, takes to the stage to declare that Sega's performance over the past 12 months has been a vindication of the company's decision to exit the hardware manufacturing business – in both creative and commercial terms. He goes on to introduce the various heads of Sega's development companies.

6.30pm: The various company heads spread out across the stand, Giving out signed Top Trump-style picture cards. Consequently, queues rapidly form with some prominent US developers spotted taking their places in a bid to collect a complete set.

Wednesday May 22–Friday May 24, Electronic Entertainment Expo 2002, Los Angeles Convention Center: After getting through the lengthy queues that formed as a result of extra-vigilant security checks, E3 proper commenced on Wednesday morning. Predictably enough, the show itself was dominated by the three-way competition between Sony, Microsoft and Nintendo, and characterised by an abundance of high-quality gaming software – it was difficult to single out a single title that stole the show. Certainly *Doom III* picked up plenty of plaudits, but there were other titles: *TimeSplitters2* and *Deus Ex II*, for example, which dominated the discussion among European journalists; or *Steel Battalion* and its lavish controller; or *Metal Gear Solid Substance* which created crowds of US journalists, agog with delight; or even the whole of the Nintendo firstparty line-up, which continued to draw long queues for the duration.

Considering the prominence given to online strategies in the days immediately preceding the exhibition, networked content was surprisingly scarce on the show floor. It did form a substantial part of the two-day conference programme that accompanied the exhibition, however. Other topics ranged widely, from a panel discussion between Yu Suzuki and Will Wright about the secrets of design, to lectures about non-traditional marketing techniques and 'advergaming'.

Elsewhere, many of E3's stand-holders resorted to marketing techniques that were arguably far too traditional, such as the raven-haired, buxom, model posing for photos in the South Hall lobby to promote Majesco's *BloodRayne*, or the 'Minority Report' film concept car designed to promote Activision's videogame of the same name. And there were even some bona fide celebrities on hand to lend their endorsement of whatever it was that they were hired to plug. Carmen Electra and Bruce Campbell showed up at THQ's stand; Rage had Mr T; Empire boasted Huggy Bear of 'Starsky and Hutch' fame; and of course there were the usual suspects such as Lara Croft, Mirra, Hawk and Hoffman.

Most publishers were concentrated in the South Hall, with Konami and Activision each especially prominent by virtue of *Metal Gear Solid Substance* and *Doom III* respectively (and indeed Robin Williams even turned up to check out *Medieval Total War*). Also prominent were EA, which had an especially loud presence, Ubi Soft, Acclaim and Infogrames. Unsurprisingly though, the most impressive stand belonged to Microsoft, which housed a striking number of high-quality (though perhaps commercially questionable) software.

Meanwhile, the sense of desperation in the Kentia Hall was again almost tangible, with several unsigned developers and various hangers-on finding a home there. Indeed despite the high points of the hall, such as CDV's stand, or the *Y-Project* demo room, it's unfortunate that these elements should be almost hidden away – in comparison to events such as ECTS where they mix freely with larger players.

The largest players though, were situated in the South Hall, where Nintendo's stand gathered fervent crowds, willing to join considerable queues to catch a glimpse of the latest outings of *Mario*, *Metroid* and *Zelda* (last year's funerary wailing now apparently forgotten). Sony, too had an impressive stand, though more in terms of diversity rather than outright quality. Certainly the much-hyped *The Getaway* apparently isn't quite there yet, though titles such as *Hardware* and *Primal* were surprisingly enjoyable. Also in the South Hall was the Sega stand, which rivalled Nintendo's in terms of outright quality and Sony's in terms of diversity – with *Super Monkey Ball 2*, *Shinobi*, and *Panzer Dragoon Orta* representing a strong cross platform line-up.

In general then, there was a healthy range of software, with considerable depth of quality across all platforms. Sony's market dominance continues to look secure, though both Nintendo and Microsoft unveiled a compelling release schedule that suggests the race for second place is far from over. And *Doom III* wasn't alone in pointing to the continued viability of the PC as a gaming platform. Nevertheless, despite some examples of creative risk-taking, particularly titles such as *Blinx*, it was worrying that there were so many generic games, sitting neatly within existing franchises or formulas – a fact that doesn't bode particularly well for the long-term health of the industry. The only other lessons to be learnt were that journalists will queue up for anything and that Europeans, if given a choice, like to spend Saturday afternoons in Santa Monica.











industryopinion

Edge asks the industry why it's not doing enough

This year was possibly the oddest E3 yet. Nintendo showed its dedication to the purist vision, Sony displayed a vast parade of attempts to cash in on former glories and Microsoft finally showed a few interesting titles. However, the PC showing was poor – not perhaps the death knell some have predicted, but a clear indicator of where the real money is being channelled.
Dene Carter
Big Blue Box Studios

Since E3 2001, western publishers have secured over $700m (£480m) of new funding, while most have also returned to profitability. This combined with a solid 2001 and positive market outlook gave E3 an upbeat feel. My only concern was the increasing shift away from original and towards derivative/sequel titles, a trend which could alienate gamers and damage future growth.
Nick Gibson
Durlacher

Nintendo stand aside, I thought the show this year was a sea of blandness. The production values and technical quality of the products on show was higher than ever, but the range of styles, both graphical and gameplay, was narrower than I have ever seen. As both a gamer and a professional, the show was quite depressing.
Ste Pickford
Zed Two

My first feeling was one of déjà vu: all the same publishers, loads of sequels – yawn. After playing the games though, it became apparent that something wonderful is happening: never before have so many truly spectacular titles been in the offing at one time. Nintendo, EA and Activision impressed me – each of their line-ups contained plenty of games to die for, all three companies should do spectacularly well this Christmas. Unfortunately for some of the scrappier players like BAM! and Titus this may be the last E3 they see.
Karl Jeffery
Climax

I thought it was significant that Nokia, Siemens, Motorola, and many other carriers from across the globe had a presence at E3. The US carrier, Sprint, even went as far as hiring a meeting room, so they all seemed to be expecting to do a lot of business at E3, compared to last year when only Nokia had a significant presence. In relation to this it was also interesting to see how many traditional publishers are looking to move into the mobile gaming sector: it's good to see that it's starting to be taken seriously.
Balbir Blugan
Kuju Entertainment

I was surprised at the sheer number of games that were coming out based on movie licenses at E3. It seems like the next logical step for the videogame industry is to join forces in a meaningful way with Hollywood to create entertainment packages that will satiate the public.
J Arcadia Kim
Electronic Arts

GameCube on the roll

It may have been the last console to launch but the loyalty of Nintendo's fanbase is underlined with a million units shipped into Europe





Luigi's Mansion **(top) and** ***Star Wars Rogue Squadron II: Rogue Leader*** **(above) proved to be the biggest sellers for the Nintendo GameCube's launch**

They've been nothing if not loyal and Nintendo finally rewarded its European fans' long wait with the launch of GameCube on May 3. The first official UK customer of GameCube, **Sarah Dodd**, a student from Clapham, demonstrated her devotion to the cause with a 17-hour wait to be first in the queue as the doors opened at HMV Oxford Street, Nintendo's preferred launch store. Several hundred Nintendo acolytes, who had resisted the charms of rival systems, turned up throughout the night and queued patiently to get their hands on a little cube of pleasure.

Without the media blitz which characterised Microsoft's introduction of Xbox or the media scrum of PlayStation2 and its pre-order farce, GameCube was thankfully mainly about gamers. There was little razzmatazz however. A man in a Sonic suit and a smattering of giggly Pikmins were on hand to provide photo ops, despite the latter not featuring as a launch title. Activision also pushed the cause of LucasArts' *Rogue Squadron II: Rogue Leader* game with lifesize models of Darth Vader and a Stormtrooper, which proved to be a perfect backdrop for Dodd's unending round of interviews, particularly when a sharp-thinking Activision PR person thrust a copy of the game into her hand. **Edge** hopes it wasn't as swiftly removed post-interviews. "Will you be rushing home to play on your GameCube all night?" seemed to be the recurrent question. "I've got to get up for work tomorrow morning," replied a visibly tiring Dodd, who was clearly wishing people would stop asking her daft questions so she could go home and start playing.



Edge is unsure whether these 'Star Wars' fans were just eager to pick up early copies of the game or were, in fact, LucasArts' stooges. They certainly added some flair to the proceedin

By any standards the launch was a success with Nintendo's PR agency Cake Media relating that 400,000 of the 500,000 units delivered to Europe sold in the launch week alone

David Gosen, Nintendo Europe's MD and Shelly Friend, Nintendo's head of European PR were also on hand to give the official version of events to the cameras, and were in a predictably ebullient mood.

By any standards the launch was a success with Nintendo's PR agency Cake Media relating that 400,000 of the 500,000 units delivered to Europe sold in the launch week alone. Some 500,000 more units have been shipped to retail since May 3 to appease retailers complaining of stock shortages. In the UK, a £130 price point and 20 titles on the shelf from day one was clearly an attractive package for consumers. And unlike the N64 (which launched with just four games) it seems incredibly unlikely that loyal GameCube purchasers will have to experience the disappointment of a price drop in the near future.

Stellar sellers

Nintendo's star software sellers have so far been *Rogue Squadron II: Rogue Leader* and *Luigi's Mansion* and the company boasts that there will be some 50 games available by the end of the summer and 100 by Christmas. Although unlikely to have made an impact on early sales, the inclusion of the 60Hz mode to the GameCube is a boon to PAL gamers. However, few of the launch games have taken advantage of this feature and Nintendo Europe told **Edge** that efforts were being made to raise awareness of this facility. "There are some games currently on the Nintendo GameCube such as *Super Smash Bros. Melee*, *Super Monkey Ball* and *Spider-Man* that cater for both frequencies… However, in order to access 60Hz you need a RGB scart lead, a compatible game and a TV that can display a 60Hz signal. Nintendo continues to actively encourage all of its development teams to implement both modes in future software for the Nintendo GameCube."

Typically, Microsoft and Nintendo have been releasing creatively constructed figures to show their respective formats in the best light. Microsoft's official line – at the time of writing – is that 500,000 Xbox units have been shifted since the launch on March 15. It also points to a higher attachment rate: 3.7 games per Xbox, to GameCube's 2.3 as slender evidence of superiority.

Market forces

Read the most recent press releases from Microsoft and Nintendo and you'll get some bewildering figures: week on week percentages, attachment rates, total European sales – all to try and add a positive spin to the respective console launches. But the UK sales figures supplied by ChartTrack show that the GameCube has nearly caught up with the Xbox after just three weeks of sales. However, the Xbox has been faring much better since its price drop on April 26 and has a better attachment rate. Sony's lead, however, still appears to be insurmountable.

ChartTrack Monthly report
Consoles by format

Format:	March	April	May	Cumulative total to date
GameCube	0	0	139,000	139,000
PS2	138,000	77,500	68,000	2,415,000
Xbox	73,500	32,500	51,500	157,500



David Gosen was on hand to deliver the Nintendo party line. Although there were no huge surprises for consumers, a strong game line-up and a price point of £130 saw units shift at a rapid speed







Unlike Microsoft's carefully orchestrated queues at its launch, genuine fans lined up around the block to get a GameCube



But clearly GameCube has had less time to establish itself and ChartTrack's UK all formats sales totals for the month ending May 25 show that Nintendo's console is only marginally behind the Xbox after just three weeks of trading (see Market forces). With launch frenzies and price-cuts distorting figures it will be a little time before a truer picture of the market emerges.

However, evidence from retailers points to healthy sales for all three formats. However, although GameCube and Xbox are ultimately expected to be successful, both companies must be slightly daunted by the continued dominance of Sony's PlayStation2 which sees absolutely no signs of slowing up.

CUTTINGS



Take 2 acquires Max Payne

Max Payne developers, Remedy and Apogee have sold the rights to the character to the game's publisher, Take 2 Interactive, for approximately $34 million (£23 million), made up of $10 million (£7 million) in cash and 969,932 shares in Take 2. Take 2 acquires the entire brand and all associated intellectual property rights – including those regarding the game engine itself, and any spin-offs, such as the mooted movie. It's also been announced that a sequel to the game (reviewed in **E**102) is in development by Rockstar Games. No doubt the publisher is hoping that the sequel will build on the 2.75 million units that the original has sold so far.

DirectX 9.0 beta announced

Microsoft has announced the release of beta version 1 of the latest version of its DirectX API, with a final release of the DirectX 9.0 Software Development Kit expected this autumn. The chief new feature of DirectX 9.0 is Microsoft's high-level shader language (HLSL), based on the C programming language, which the company claims to offer developers the easiest-to-use graphics creation toolset, supporting both patch and polygonal meshes and improved DirectPlay performance for multiplayer games. Like earlier versions, it allows developers to access hardware features without having to write hardware-specific code.

Hollis project in pipeline

While at E3 **Edge** spotted Martin Hollis, director on *GoldenEye* and head of software at Rare before taking on a brief sabbatical from games to assist NTD (a subdivision of NoA) with the design and development of GameCube. Now head of Zoonami Limited, a studio founded in 2000 and widely rumoured to be a second party to Nintendo, Hollis wouldn't disclose any details regarding his current project. **Edge** sources at the show, however, confirmed that the game in question is neither a *GoldenEye* nor a *Gran Turismo* clone as is presently rumoured. But it is a game "with many elements" and although **Edge**'s sources were unable to divulge any more details, they did say nothing like it was shown at E3.

ECTS gets boost from Sony

Hundreds of 16-year-old Website editors and countless joystick manufacturers can only mean one thing: ECTS. But this year, Sony's presence could help buoy the industry event

ECTS hasn't been quite itself over the last couple of years. The ailing event has seen an explosion of new thirdparty peripheral companies and Korean side-shows at the expense of some of the industry's big hitters, including Sony and Nintendo. So it was with some jubilation that ECTS event director, **Andy Lane**, could announce that Sony was to host its own consumer element of the event for 2002. "Sony's massive involvement will help to bring the entertainment and excitement back to ECTS. I'd like to encourage everybody to be a part of what will be a very exciting week for the industry."

Taking place between August 29 and September 31, ECTS will be back to its spiritual home at Earl's Court – after a short, and some might say refreshing, move to London's ExCeL last year. Sony's canny decision to run its own consumer event alongside ECTS is already creating a buzz and should ensure that a few of the industry's bigger names will be attending. Although confirmation from the likes of Konami, Microsoft, Nintendo and EA has yet to be made, the prospect of their attendance seems much rosier now.

Strong line-up

GDCE is also set return to ECTS and will run from August 27–29. A strong line-up of speakers and discussions has already been established and speakers will include Simon and Dene Carter of Big Blue Box, Charles Cecil of Revolution Software, Jonty Barnes and Richard Evans of Lionhead Studios and Phil Harrison of SCEE. Feedback from previous events has been more than positive and developers have found the kind of discussions available at GDCE fruitful.

This year the focus is on the application of knowledge, understanding what makes a successful game as well as the opportunity to network at the bar. Registration can be made at http://www.gdc-europe.com with IDGA and TIGA members receiving a ten per cent discount.

Talking codeshop

Discussions at GDCE are likely to be nourishing and far ranging. Here's just a sample:

Developing in Developing Countries
Developer Publisher Relations: Bridging the Gap
Scripting in *Black & White*
AI in *State of Emergency*
Audio in *The Getaway*
A Critical Analysis of Games
Systemic Level Design for Emergent Gameplay
Social Processes: Moving Beyond Individualism



Back at Earls Court for 2002, ECTS will hopefully see some big names returning to the show floor. Who knows, the *Erotica Island* girls may even make a welcome re-appearance

Criterion warn industry about burnout

Philanthropic middleware specialist looks to the future at E3, and offers advice to blooming industry: use RenderWare, or die

With the games industry now forecasted to become the largest entertainment provider of the 21st century, Criterion chose E3 to suggest that codeshops might do well to look past traditional forms of financing and development. **David Lau-Kee**, president and CEO of Criterion Software Ltd explains the potential pitfalls of such fast expansion, "The industry has experienced enormous growth in a short space of time. Both publishers and developers have been working phenomenally hard to keep up with the continuous advances in technology and the market expectations of consumers. Naturally, this has meant a huge investment of resources, and a move towards the high-cost, high-risk strategy that has so often caused great pain in other creative entertainment industries."



***GTAIII* shows what can be achieved using RenderWare, although some PC owners have expressed dismay at the framerate**

Management tools

His solution, naturally, is for the industry to make wider use of Criterion's RenderWare middleware suite, advice that Ubi Soft looks to have pre-empted with its recent licensing of RenderWare Studio. The tool, which eases the management and technological problems encountered by cross-platform developers, will be used to help streamline Ubi Soft's multiplatform strategy, as well as, according to their director of operations, **Michel Pierfitte**, allowing the French publisher to "continuously enhance the creative and quality aspects of our games."

Quality sound

Meanwhile, Criterion itself is expanding rapidly, both with the purchase of fellow middleware supplier MathEngine, and a new partnership with Dolby. The audio giant will work with Criterion to construct tools enabling the production of home cinema-quality sound across all major gaming platforms, the first result of which is the integration of the Dolby Pro Logic II Interactive Content Encoder into RenderWare Audio. For skipreaders and the jargon-phobic, the essence of the last sentence is that high quality audio, an oft-overlooked aspect of next-generation platforms, is now more accessible than ever, at least to those prepared to accept Lau-Kee's advice.



David Lau-Kee, president of Criterion, and a man fearing for the industry's future

Xbox Hackers Chip 'n' Charge

Microsoft's copy protection and region coding routines thwarted by the fast and the curious

The PC component heritage of Microsoft's Xbox was always going to attract curious hackers, and so it's of little surprise that, just over seven months into the Xbox's lifespan, the machine's complex copy protection has already been thwarted.

Two chips, X-Tender and Enigmah, are available at the time of writing, allowing gamers to play imported games and the legally-circumspect 'backups' and costing $79 and $69 respectively from popular online retailers. Both will prove difficult for those with little experience in electronic surgery to implement, involving 29 wires and some considerable nerve, but, as free market competition conditions dictate, their price and complexity are expected to freefall. A third manufacturer, Messiah, makers of the PlayStation2 mod chip, promises a $36 12-wire solution within days.

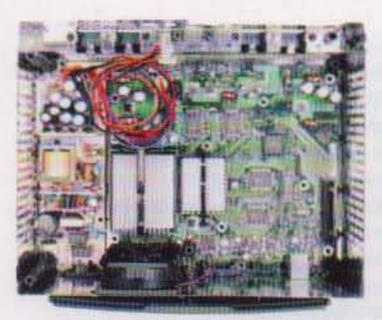
The motivation, though, appears to be less the promise of cheap, pirated software – although **Edge** has already encountered one Internet site offering *Jedi Starfighter*, *Amped* and *Nightcaster* for download – and more the prospect of using the Xbox as an open, stable platform for PC development.

Enigmah, who has already released a boot disk with their chip allowing Xbox owners to shift the graphics output of their system from PAL to NTSC and back again, is planning to spearhead the bedroom dev scene with further software releases allowing Web browsing, MP3 and DivX playback. A port of the Linux operating system, recently released on PlayStation2 (see Codeshop, p16) is also anticipated, and more homebrew products appear inevitable, with the community's Holy Grail appearing to be an Xbox release of MAME, rumoured to already exist in Xbox form.

Algorithm nation

A further blow to the console's security came as Andrew Huang, a graduate student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, published a paper detailing how to locate and derive the Xbox encryption algorithms, the presence of which prevents people from running their own code on the system.

The presence of an amateur coding scene on the system could prove useful to Microsoft, and many regard piracy as a factor in the success of the PlayStation. In light of that, and also with regards to its stated (but sadly in-evident) open policies on region-free gaming, its stance on the modchips is eagerly awaited. Thus far, Microsoft has declined to comment.



Intrepid electronic adventurers may have seen the inside of an Xbox before, but soldering 29 wires to it isn't simple

Recently Reviewed

Edge brings you a rundown of last issue's review scores

Title	Platform	Publisher	Developer	Score
Dungeon Siege	PC	Microsoft	Gas Powered Games	7
Shikigami No Shiro	Xbox	MediaQuest	Alfa System	7
Zone of the Enders: The Fist of Mars	GBA	Konami	In-house	7
Gun Metal	Xbox	Rage	In-house	6
Psyvaria Complete	PS2	Taito	Success	6
Tekken 4	PS2	Namco	In-house	6
Downforce	PS2	Virgin/Titus	Smartdog	5
Groove Adventure Rave: Fighting Live	GC	Konami	KCEJ	5
Medal of Honor Frontline	PS2	Electronic Arts	In-house	5
Spider-Man	PC/GC/PS2	Activision	In-house	4
Britney's Dance Beat	PS2	THQ	Metro	3



Dungeon Siege



Shikigami No Shiro



Zone of the Enders: The Fist of Mars



Tekken 4

CUTTINGS



It's raining dragons

Following a teaser screenshot campaign, Bam! Entertainment has finally unveiled the dragon models that will be used in its forthcoming film tie-in, *Reign of Fire*, currently in development at Kuju Entertainment's London studio. Previewed in **E**110, the game is a thirdperson action title that allows players to take the role of human resistance forces, or their indomitable dragon foes. The company has also announced that it will be releasing a Game Boy Advance version of the title, which will be developed by Crawfish Interactive to sit alongside PlayStation2, Xbox and GameCube versions. All versions will be released this autumn.

NXN Software announces new starter pack

Smaller development teams are set to have their asset and production management needs taken care of thanks to the newly announced NXN alienbrain Starter Pack. Aimed at development teams of around ten people, the package will retail for $9,990 (£6,850) and features "version control for media assets and source code, project management and workflow functionality." With working demo code an increasingly important prerequisite for obtaining publisher interest, the need for such an entry-level package is pronounced. The package can also be extended to 20 users. See http://www.nxn-software.com for more information.

Promotions reach Climax

MotoGP developer Climax has announced the promotion of Gary Liddon from head of studios to the position of chief operating officer (COO) and of Joseph Cavalla from art director to managing director of Climax Fareham. The move comes after a sustained period of growth for the company, which is currently developing *Warhammer Online*. As COO, Liddon will take responsibility for the day-to-day operation of the entire group, allowing Karl Jeffery, the company's founder and CEO, to launch two new business units.

PlayStation2's latest mascot

www.playstation2-linux.com

Forget Crash or Daxter. The release of Linux for PS2 sees Tux the Linux penguin elevated as the face of Sony's console-cum-home computer





Although the Linux operating system ported to the PlayStation2 is slightly old in Linux terms, most PC Linux applications work fine on the PS2

According to the conspiracy theorists, Sony's Linux kit for PlayStation2 is a significant move. Depending on who you believe it's either a plot to get PlayStation2 registered as a computer by the European Union, which would result in lower import duties, or the consumer electronics giant's attempt to big up the open source challenge to Microsoft's opening system business.

Sadly the truth is less prosaic. Despite general apathy towards the PC in Japan, Linux is very popular, which is why a team at SCEI decided to port a Red Hat-style version of Linux to the PlayStation2, combined, of course, with its hard drive and network adaptor kit. Once the result was successfully released (so far it's shipped over 9000 units domestically) it was only a matter of time before interest was piqued in the North American and European markets. Pressure, both within Sony and externally, was applied. The worldwide release of the PlayStation2 Linux kit has followed.

Priced at €249 plus VAT and delivery for the hard drive, network adaptor, keyboard, mouse and monitor cable, the European release of the kit created some problems for Sony though. The most important was one



This is what users get for their €249: a 40Gb hard drive, Ethernet adaptor, USB keyboard and mouse and monitor cable

of perception. "This isn't something we want to promote as a mainstream release," explains **Sarah Ewen**, who heads up the PS2 Linux program. "It's designed for those people who already know a bit about Linux or those who are interested in programming on their PlayStation2s." To date, 2000 kits have been shipped into Europe, with more to follow as demand requires.

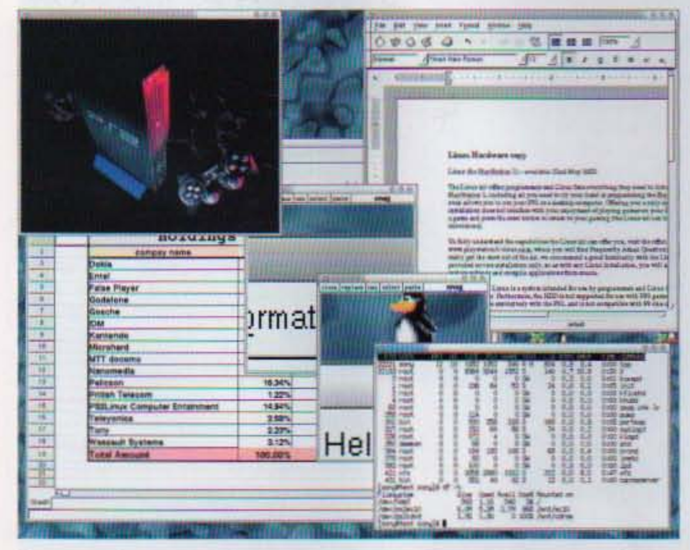
Customer support

Other more mundane problems included setting up a distribution channel, Sony having shut down its commercial Website, and retraining customer support teams who previously only had to deal with simple hardware problems. "We've trained up about ten people to walk users though the Linux install procedure," explains Ewen. This is a non-trivial task. Having clipped the hard drive into place and screwed on the Ethernet adaptor, users have to install the operating system and various software packages from the two install disks. They must also have a new memory card in place, as this is where the Linux kernel is stored, from which the PS2 boots up. Game saves can be stored on the same card but only after the kernel has been saved as this process formats the card.

"The install itself is relatively simple but it's not bulletproof," warns Ewen. The trickiest point is a disk swap at the end of the install. If you press 'enter' before swapping between the two disks, the install fails horribly. Another issue to be considered is that in order to work with PS2, monitors must be able to sync to the green input of the standard RGB signal. Most do, but by no means all. Once Linux is installed, the kit can be run on a TV.

Perhaps the most interesting part of the program, however, is that it marks the first time Sony has released the PS2 hardware manuals to non-licensed developers. The only manual not included covers the input/output processor, which can't be released because of the implications for piracy.

According to Ewen, this level of information means committed home programmers have the potential to create professional-quality software. "You will have access to the Emotion Engine and the Graphics Synthesiser. There's nothing to stop you coding right to the metal," she explains. Also provided are graphics libraries such as mesa and ps2gl. The Linux distribution supports most languages including C, C++, Perl and Python. "The Linux kit follows on from Sony's Net Yaroze kit for the PlayStation, only it's cheaper and far more powerful," she ends. "It will be fascinating to see what people end up creating."



Users can perform general tasks such as word processing, spreadsheets, email and playing mp3s. There's no Web browser, but several, including Opera, are being ported

Graphics card race hots up

www.3dlabs.com
www.matrox.com

Matrox and 3Dlabs fuel competition between 3D graphics cards as they reveal their new pieces of silicon

The pace in the PC games card sector has been so intense companies such as Matrox and 3Dlabs have found it hard to keep up. This is partly because games haven't been their main focus; Matrox has a large share of business users and 3Dlabs the top-end professional graphics market. Equally, neither is geared to match nVidia's six-month product cycle. But with games such a high profile area of the market, both are now talking about their new performance gaming parts.

3Dlabs' solution is particular innovative. Its Visual Processing Architecture (VPA) approach brings functionality generally used in CPUs to the graphics space and is combined with the sort of multi-chip philosophy last seen in the Voodoo 4 and 5 range. 3Dlab's chip is known as the P10. "Next-generation 3D graphics APIs such as DirectX and OpenGL are moving towards the model of high-level, generic shading languages which give developers more freedom in the visual effects they can achieve," says **Neil Trevett**, 3Dlabs' senior vice president of market development.

Parallel process

For this reason, each P10 features over 200 programmable Single Instruction, Multiple Data (SIMD) arrays, allowing developers to write microcode to process large amounts of data in parallel. "By supporting features such as subroutines and loops, developers have can explore a huge palette of visual effects," Trevett continues. 3Dlabs also expects its approach to virtual memory, which maps all memory access into a 16Gb virtual space, to help solve some of the resource management issues faced by developers.

The first fruits of 3Dlabs' approach will be seen in its workstation visual processing board for CAD users, with gaming parts to follow in the autumn. And following the company's buyout by audio card specialist Creative Labs, the release will be backed by a large-scale marketing campaign, which seems likely to be tied into Creative's existing high-profile consumer branding.

Robustness not cutting-edge performance has been the characteristic



of Matrox' graphics cards. The Parhelia-512 GPU (codename G1000) bucks this trend, offering a blistering specification.

Class monitor

Featuring 80 million transistor chip, fabricated at 0.15 microns, the Parhelia-512 has a 256bit memory interface giving 20Gb/s of memory bandwidth and supports up to 256Mb of RAM and AGP 4x as well as the forthcoming AGP 8x standard.

It also delivers 10bit colour channels, resulting in over one billion onscreen colours, for those with monitors which support the high resolution palette. The card can output to two monitors at a resolution of 2048x1536 pixels or three monitors with one screen split between two.

More importantly for games, it has four rendering pipelines and offers single-pass quad texturing, allowing developers to create highly detailed surface effects. Each of the pipelines also features four DirectX 9-compatible vertex shaders integrated into one unit, as well as five programmable pixel shaders.

Interestingly, the Parhelia-512 doesn't support full screen anti-aliasing. Instead it only anti-aliases edge pixels, applying 16 times super-sampling – a technique Matrox calls 16x fragment anti-aliasing. This results in a minimal performance hit. Standard anti-aliasing is highly processor-intensive. Pricing and board configuration have yet to be confirmed but the Parhelia-512 is set to start shipping this summer.



In contrast to other graphics vendors, Matrox's anti-aliasing solution only smooths edge pixels, which makes for a far more efficient use of processor power

Standards, what standards?

With the graphics hardware competition hotting up, some developers are expressing concern about the consequences for the APIs such as DirectX on which they rely to gain unified access to the different hardware. The battle between nVidia and ATI over the standard for pixel shaders resulted in Microsoft, which controls DirectX, releasing a fragmented version of DirectX 8. DirectX 8.1 featured four different and competing standards for pixel shader implementation – fragmentation which went against the rationale for DirectX's existence. DirectX 9 is already long overdue and rumours suggest much of the delay has been caused by warring graphics card companies trying to ensure the featuresets of their forthcoming parts are supported – something that may be impossible to achieve elegantly within one standardised framework.











The quad vertex shader is used to create complex surface effects as it can handle four textures in a single render pass, as demonstrated by this bass fish example

OUT THERE

REPORTAGE



The Vectrex was home to unusual titles such as *3D Crazy Coaster*. Win a machine courtesy of 'Game On'





No need to mutilate your copy of **Edge**: simply call the number listed and quote **Edge** to get your 3 for 2 offer





Mulberry's leather case is clearly for the more refined gamer. Leather-bound TV not included

01 Victor's Vectrex

UK: It's one of the most sought after consoles in the world. No, not the GameCube, but the MB Vectrex system. First released to widespread apathy back in 1982 by General Consumer Electronics the Vectrex never achieved massmarket penetration. However, in recent years it has become renowned among retro collectors as an elegant system designed for a more civilised age.

Edge, in conjunction with 'Game On', has a boxed Vectrex console plus assorted games, a pass for all the films at the Barbican exhibition, a 'Game On' book and poster plus a 'Joystick Junkies' T-shirt to give away. To win this exceptional piece of technology answer the following simple question: which game came built into the Vectrex console? Two free Barbican 'Game On' tickets will go to two runners-up. Answers should be marked 'Vectrex competition' and sent on a postcard to the usual address, or by email to edge@futurenet.co.uk by July 15. Winners will be notified in **E**114, though all readers can take advantage of the special **Edge** 3 for 2 offer. Just call 020 7638 8891 and quote **Edge**. The exhibition runs until September 15.

02 Xbox gets a leathering

US: Not content with designing leather handbags and briefcases, Mulberry has now made inroads into the technology sector with a range of bespoke cases for laptops and personal organisers. But more bizarre still, is its Xbox case, and while no specific price has been set it is expected to cost in excess of £200 and should be available this summer. Mulberry's mission statement: to deliver products that embody "classic Englishness with a hint of eccentricity" is certainly being upheld, but are there enough country gentlemen with TV sets in their mansions to fuel demand? Go to www.mulberry.com for more details.

Soundbytes

"Like a starving man in the desert who comes upon a cracker, we're going to savour every morsel and then lick our fingers clean here in Metroid Primetime."

'Electronic Gaming Monthly' getting worked up over *Metroid Prime* at E3.

"The biggest innovation is how we use Geo-Mod technology. We now have AI bots using Geo-Mod against you, with Geo-Mod based-puzzles that will require that the player use new ways to defeat enemies."

Yeah, right. Rob Loetus, *Red Faction 2* producer.

"Any plans for other formats?"

EU journo at *The Getaway* Q&A session opens mouth before checking whether brain is active.

"It had never occurred to me to use slurp to compute the square root of a quarternion. My question is, why bother to multiply all the components of the quarternion by 0.5f when it is normalised in the next step?"

A letter printed in 'GameDeveloper' magazine. And people accuse **Edge** of being nerdy

03 Fighting fit fantasies

UK: Ian Livingstone's life is an adventure in which HE is the hero. But before he started the empire of Eidos a series of books were created with SKILL, STAMINA and LUCK. With the collaboration of Steve Jackson the 'Fighting Fantasy' series went on to sell over 15 million copies – a number that was duly noted on his *adventure sheet*. Now you can relive those tales again from June, courtesy of Wizard Books. You will need courage, determination, two dice and £4.99. May the luck of the gods go with you.

04 Sony's peddling pets

Japan: The Japanese love for digital pets continues apace. The new bear-like Aibo may not be quite as cute as the previous iterations but at ¥7,000 (£39) it's certainly more affordable. Sony is also developing a number of accessories to keep the original Aibo occupied. The most outlandish is a buggy which can ferry the little critter from room to room – though don't anticipate Tony Hawk's-style grinding for a few years yet.

05 Sunshine PALs

UK: Entrancing images and movies of *Super Mario Sunshine* from E3 have seen hardened videogamers salivating at the prospect of playing the plumber's next adventure as early as summer 2002. But PAL GameCube owners may have to wait until Christmas to see what all the fuss is about. Enter Datel's Action Replay disk. This welcome piece of technology allows most import GameCube titles to run on the PAL console. It's due out in July and will retail at £30. Those torturous waits for UK Nintendo releases will hopefully be a thing of the past.

Data Stream

Number of languages the 'Fighting Fantasy' series of books have been translated into: **28**

Total number of sales generated by the videogame industry during 2000: **$6.6bn (£4.5bn)**

Total number of sales generated by the videogame industry during 2001: **$9.4bn (£6.4bn)**

Location of Microsoft's Xbox European production factory: **Hungary**

Location of Microsoft's new cost-cutting production factory: **China**

Number of questions to feature in Zoo Digital's forthcoming GBA title *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?*: **1,000**

Number of questions to feature in TDK's forthcoming PlayStation title *Westlife: Fan-O-Mania*: **500**

Number of EA titles in the all formats top 40 charts, week ending Saturday May 11: **9**

Number of NPCs in *The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind*: **3,224**

Number of NPCs you can't kill in *The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind*: **0**

Name of ex-Miss World and 'Wonder Woman' actress who gave her voice to the female Nord characters in *The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind*: **Lynda Carter**

Number of years Hiroshi Yamauchi has been president of Nintendo: **53**

Date Hiroshi Yamauchi stepped down as president: **May 31**

Name of new president of Nintendo: **Satoru Iwata**

Company that's acquired the movie rights to *Fatal Frame*: **Dreamworks**

Percentage of gamers surveyed who said they would still be playing videogames in ten years time, according to The Interactive Software Association (IDSA): **60 per cent**

Percentage of PC gamers who are female, according to the same survey: **38 per cent**

Percentage of console gamers who are female, according to the same survey: **28 per cent**

Growth of US economy in the year 2000, according to the same survey: **7.4 per cent**

Growth of US computer and videogame sales during the same period: **14.9 per cent**



Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone signed copies of their new books – turn to page 321 to find them



Only the most popular 'Fighting Fantasy' books make the updated reprint. So, no 'Starship Traveller' then?

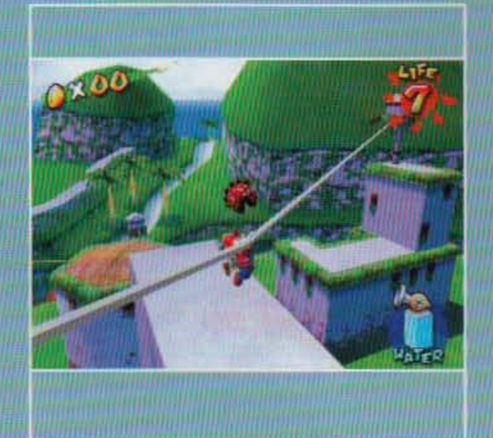

The new Aibo buggy is still in development, but it's nice to see that a safety belt is included as standard







Although Edge frowns on the idea of game cheats, the Action Replay disk is a boon for import gamers




Super Mario Sunshine (left) and *Biohazard* (above) should play on PAL machines with Action Replay

06



Since the surreal antics of Dom Joly, London residents clearly find this kind of thing so passé



07





Wolfenstein 3Div (above), *F-Zero* (right) and *Rainbow Islands* (below) all courtesy of Div Arena



08



"The US army has a dubious human rights record – discuss." A question unlikely to feature in *Soldiers*



Potential recruits may be disappointed to hear that there's no digestive minigame in the final code



The second US army game, *Operations*, will focus on teamwork, tactics and khaki fashion tips

06 Friendship rings

UK: "Sonic the Hedgehog rolls on to the Nintendo GameCube in a move that sees the videogames industry's most illustrious competitors trade rings." Not that passers-by witnessed quite the friendliness suggested in the press release when Sonic and Mario paraded themselves on the streets of London on May 18 to celebrate the launch of *Sonic Advance 2* on Nintendo hardware. It was hardly the most original publicity stunt, but it at least shows that Nintendo is willing to spend a few Euros in its European territory for a change.

07 Retro grades

UK: A recent competition to develop classic videogames using Div Arena produced some impressive results. Though the competition has now ended, FastTrak, publishers of the versatile creation package, was so impressed with the entries over a six week period that it plans to launch other similar competitions in the near future. The overall winner, *Wolfenstein 3Div*, was created by Lukas Nijsten, though other notable entries came in the form of *F-Zero* and *Rainbow Islands*. For more information on future competitions coinciding with the release of Div2 go to www.div-arena.com.

08 A few dim men

US: The US Army is to release two free PC games in a bid to drive up recruitment. The first game, *Soldiers*, focuses on training, tactics and physical challenges and should give players the opportunity to "see how life in the army can be." The second, *Operations*, uses Epic's Unreal Engine and allows up to 32 players to cooperate in missions which will emphasise teamwork, leadership and tactical awareness. Apparently the US Army itself will be hosting online play with 140 servers, though cheaters will be punished by spending time in a virtual Fort Leavenworth. Go to www.americasarmy.com for more.

Continue

Tetsuya Mizuguchi
For his charming magnanimity, and the signed picture
Marty and Elaine at LA's The Dresden Rooms
'Staying Alive' – but apparently, only just
Star Wars: Episode II Attack of the Clones
If only to appease **Edge**'s news editor

Quit

Big hairy men who commandeer your bed
Just one pitfall of E3
E3 booth babes
Come on chaps, it's the year 2002. Get up to date
Star Wars: Episode II Attack of the Clones
A po-faced, obvious and hollow prequel we must construct



09 Opening the Xbox

Plenty of books have taken delight in peering into the inner working of the evil empire Microsoft. 'Red Herring' journalist Dean Takahashi's account appears to be different, initially at least. Rather than digging through the business machinations of the Gates-Ballmer colossus, his story is how a couple of minor members of staff managed to turn the company on its head and get it to launch a games console, of all things.

The bare bones of the tale have been told before. The group, consisting of Seamus Blackley, Kevin Bachus, Ted Hase and Otto Berkes, came up with a proposal to make a Windows games machine, which chimed with Bill Gates' concerns that Sony was going to rule the living room and replace the PC with PS2.

Other pieces of intrigue generated along the way included the battles between AMD and Intel for the CPU contract and nVidia and Gigapixel for the graphics chip. Another early feint saw Intel as a possible Xbox partner, before it became clear that there was no way Xbox would make financial sense if it played PC games as well. The 'should-we, shouldn't we' discussions over the hard drive are also well worn. What makes this book worth reading however, is the political fighting within Microsoft which almost saw Xbox stillborn.

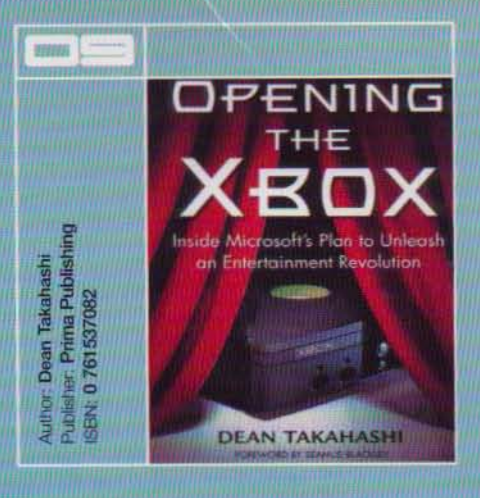
The fiercest battles occurred early in the design process between Microsoft's WebTV group, which wanted to turn Xbox into a general-purpose set-top box, and its originators, who rightly argued it had to be a kick-ass gaming machine. To begin with though, they were less powerful figures within the Microsoft hierarchy. They were also naive when it came to handling such a big hardware project. One battle saw WebTV in the ascendancy because the Xbox team had forgotten to include the price of screws into their parts budget. Not a way to impress Microsoft president, Steve Ballmer who is reported as regularly booming to Blackley during the pre-production phase, "Are we making any money yet?"

Yet for all the stones Takahashi turns – and yes, there was a game based on the girl and robot demo but it got cancelled – there's also a downside to his account. By spinning it as a triumphal tale, it lacks tension. While his focus is on how Xbox made it from initial vision to US release (incidentally the book's finishing point), there is little overt critical analysis of whether Microsoft made the correct decisions and whether Xbox will be seen as a success in four years' time. Instead, problems are overcome; people argue but get along for the good of the team; deadlines are tight but somehow everyone pulls through.

Little comment is generated by the most high profile mistake so far, designer Horace Luke's appalling controller cock up. Equally, while Rick Thompson's failure to secure the acquisitions of either Sega, Nintendo, Midway or Square is mentioned, it's not commented on as having important consequences for Xbox's success, which has clearly been the case.

Partly this is because Takahashi is obviously close to his two main sources for the book, Blackley, who also provides the foreword, and Bachus – neither of whom were dealing with the strategic elements of the Xbox business plan. Revealingly both have since left Microsoft. There's also an underlying feeling that the US audience will prefer to read about an American business success story, and this precludes a more cynical – or realistic, depending on one's point of view – approach.

That said, for anyone interested in the business side of the games industry, 'Opening the Xbox' is eminently readable and sheds light on the significant development of the past couple of years. Recommended.



Author: Dean Takahashi
Publisher: Prima Publishing
ISBN: 0 761537082





Site: **Orisinal**
URL: **http://www.orisinal.com**

10 Website of the month

Quiet, beautiful, simple and elegant, Ferry Halim's collection of Web games offers precious and gentle entertainment for fey gamers trapped in raucous office environments. Think Game & Watch designed by Belle & Sebastian fans, and consider Orisinal a moment's respite for your sensitive inner gamer. Pictured above, *Chicken Wings* has the player waddling left and right and firing floating umbrellas into the grateful grasp of falling chicklets. Other **Edge** favourites include *Bubble Bees* (capture bees inside bubbles), *Hydrophobia* (frog hop from lilypad to lilypad catching flies) and new addition, *Bauns*, a smart hybrid of *Arkanoid* and *Puzzle Bobble*.

11 Advertainment

Japan: Microsoft decided to announce the recent price cut affecting its Xbox hardware in Japan by creating an ad featuring an older gentleman being tickled by a ball of fluff at the end of a stick. Hell, as long as it works…



Xbox logo appears. So does older gentleman.



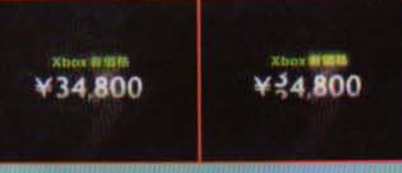
"Oooooh. Aaaaaaaaah," says our elderly friend.



"Aaaaaaaaaah. Ooooooooooh," he continues.



Voiceover: "What about ¥24,800?" "Ooooooh," comes the response.



Sound of cash register doing its thing.



Voiceover: "Good!"



Voiceover: "It became crazy." Xbox logo appears.



REDEYE

A sideways look at the videogame industry

Cooperation: play nicely, with a friend

This column is lo-fi, scrawled with a free pen in first principles on the back of some never-read press releases far, far from home. Nevertheless, it is important; not constructed from scattered thoughts as the noodles start to boil, but from something that RedEye has thought about since 1988. It is a crucial, but oft-forgotten tenet of gaming, obvious, even in this place and in this state of mind. Here, collapsed in a well-known coffee chain a few miles from the LA convention centre, bright white headache not soothed by the latte, loud American voices talking about Moby and profit share. Here, where it is easier to hate everyone than anywhere else, it is still clear, and it has been clear for years and years: all games should have a cooperative mode.

RedEye is not, in theory at least, an anti-social person. If you weren't all so absolutely morally bankrupt and physically repulsive, RedEye would love to play nicely. RedEye would love to spend all of his time in big hyperventilating groups of men, catching diseases from sticky, sweaty controllers. RedEye would love to go to E3 every single day, and hear bitter, humourless wisecracks about Powerpuff Link. Feel them pressed against you, heaving, sweating, grinding for a glimpse of *Sunshine*. A short man with a bald spot pushes in from the left, and something hard in his pocket is pressing against RedEye's thigh. It better be a press disk. Please God, let it be a press disk.

Sorry. Convention season, y'know? Show time. It tends to provoke that kind of emotion, particularly if you tend towards the sociopathic anyway. But come on, RedEye, you don't loathe everyone. Kirsten Dunst isn't physically repulsive, is she? And you don't have any evidence to suggest she's morally bankrupt either, despite countless hours of Internet research. So take a deep breath, a gulp of sickly processed Third-World-killing coffee, calm down, and play nice. Every game should have a cooperative mode. Not for the gawking E3 apes. Just in case Dunst comes calling. See?

In '88, one of RedEye's teenage friends owned a BBC Micro, and a game called *Zenon*, own-brand *Attack of the Mutant Camels* for dopeless middle-class kids. Only way it would run is if you slid your fingers insider the disk drive and pushed the floppy disk up, held it against whatever magical imp ran disk drives in those days. In retrospect that was fairly stupid, given electrical sprites are just as likely to fill teenage bodies with 240v of supernatural electricity as they are to chew up data. But it was worth it, because *Zenon* – an average game at best in singleplayer – was magical in cooperative.

It wasn't RedEye's first or best coop experience, sure, but it was the risk/reward of the fingers in the drive that truly impressed the difference a teamplay mode can make. It's simple. Playing with someone who is worse than you, you can be the hero. You've someone to protect and encourage, someone made from human AI, not the brittle, faulty stuff of *GoldenEye*'s Natalya. When they die, you've failed, and it's your job to protect and encourage. Conversely, playing with someone who is better, you can learn. You get to play a part in adventures that were previously beyond you, and, eventually, the chance arises for heroics of your own. Rags to riches, small town boy come good, stuff of fairytales. It's what gaming should be.

Why do we always have to fight? Some circumstantial evidence: *Operation Flashpoint*'s greatest moments were always when two of you played across a LAN and, from preview code, it looks like Pivotal's *Desert Storm* will shine most in coop multiplayer too. Internet gossip has *Dungeon Siege* as an average RPG for the solo adventurer, but as pure joy in LAN party form. The game of last year? *Phantasy Star Online*. *Sonic 2*'s Tails, and parent mode in *Klonoa 2*. *Perfect Dark*. *Baldur's Gate II* on PS2. Coop dancing in *Jungle Book Groove Party*. These come to mind instantly; there are more, but RedEye is running out of paper. Make the point.

Gaming needs to be social if we're to lose our reclusive image, but more than that it should be social because social gaming is more fun

Gaming should be social. It *needs* to be social if we're to lose our reclusive image, but more than that it should be social because social gaming is more fun. But it has to be more than deathmatch, because killing and competition isn't for everyone. Besides, gaming can be just as competitive with two players working towards the same goal, because everyone wants to be the hero, and end of level statistics humiliate or fill with pride. The most aggravating excuse RedEye has heard to defend lack of coop modes is that the singleplayer mode has been constructed for just that – one player – and that in twoplayer it will prove nonsensical. So what?

Halo has one of the most beautifully executed storylines in recent years – no tedious paragraphs of peripheral explanation, no poorly acted FMV or tortuous attempts to find moral standpoints. It does not overcomplicate: the plot is tight, simple, well produced, and built entirely around the principle that you are Master Chief, the sole saviour of the human race. Except Bungie then lets you play twoplayer coop through the singleplayer missions, which doesn't fit in with the story, the cut-scenes, at all. And there isn't anyone who cares, because it adds layers to the game. There is no difference in level structure whether you play with one or two players; it is almost an afterthought, and it's brilliant.

Fuck coherence. Make coop an unlockable extra if you're concerned about losing the delicate flow of your piss-poor sci-fi trash novella, but listen. If you are working on a game at the moment, and there is no way of involving other people in the experience, you are restricting your audience to sociophobes, those with a lust for the solitary. Rethink. Let RedEye and partner drive and shoot in *The Getaway*, play as co-conspirators in *Republic*, experience *Tomb Raider* with *two* pirates in *Galleon*. Twoperson trading teams in GBA *Elite*. Tag-team 2D fighting, splitscreen survival horror. Let us drive for the same team, go for the constructors championship, rig races like Schumacher and Barrichello, lap up the boos on the podium. Let us be friends. Not with each other, naturally, because you're disgusting and morally bankrupt. But with Kirsten Dunst? Sure.

And that's it. Out of space on the press release, pen dying like cheap pens always do, flight home to come. Tired of anger. Coffee gone cold. Sum up? Play nice.

RedEye is a veteran videogame journalist. His views do not necessarily coincide with **Edge**'s

The word 'digital' is a triumph of marketing. Videogames have always been digital artefacts, but now so are music, television and cinema. However, the term is used to represent something brighter and harder: the apotheosis of hi-tech futurism. And its rise and subsequent reinvention within another industry points to some parallels with the current state of videogaming.

The digital music revolution of the '80s seemed simple. Throw away the clutter and fuzziness of analogue systems and embrace a shiny, clean new future. True, there were some diehards who insisted that vinyl sounded better than compact disc. But in truth, they were deceived by the fact that, since certain bass frequencies cannot be encoded onto vinyl, analogue playback equipment has always included circuitry that boosts the bottom end to restore what was lost in the pressing process. The much-vaunted 'warmth' of vinyl is artificial.

Many of the most exciting developments of videogaming recently can be seen in a similar light: as a kind of analogue modelling. Games are becoming fuzzed up and metaphorically fattened. The most obvious example of this is in the field of control systems, where the standard for decades was one of simple switches. Of course our modern 'analogue' joypads are still digital: the sticks and triggers have resolutions of so many bits; the buttons return set numerical values. But they are emulating the feel of a continuous, analogue control system.

This has enabled an emancipation of gameplay structures, of which the prime example right now is the superbly engineered *Super Monkey Ball*. Imagine playing it with buttons instead of a stick. You would effectively be issuing commands at discrete intervals, at one remove from the gameworld. But with the analogue stick, you caress the world itself, directly, and because you are so organically melded with the system, you feel more for the dumb little simian than you would otherwise.

Or think of the old arcade games that had a simple digital attitude to existence. There were the quick and the dead, and nothing in between. One pixel in the wrong place and you lose a life. The brilliantly conceived shield system in *Halo* offers an analogue-style alternative that not only lessens useless frustration but actually adds to the game's tactical content, as you scramble for cover so that your shield can recharge. *Devil May Cry*, meanwhile, applies this to the death of your own enemies: no longer are they just killed or not killed, they are killed in more or less stylish and kinetically pleasing ways.

The idea of analogue modelling can also be applied to visual aesthetics. For those whose eyes are tired of the pointy perfection of many PC efforts, where everything is indiscriminately sharp and shiny, along comes a game such as *Ico*, deliberately emulating the graininess of film's analogue celluloid, and the depth of field of living eyes. With puzzles, too, the old digital paradigm – find a switch to open that door – is slowly dying out, even though it continues shamelessly to appear in substandard tat such as *Jedi Outcast*. Even the *Tomb Raider* franchise, once shorthand for banal switch-hunting, is promising, with *Angel of Darkness*, to introduce a level of analogue fuzziness, with subtle variations in Lara's physical abilities throughout the game. Meanwhile, blended dynamic animation systems, such as those promised for the dragons in *Reign of Fire*, are attempting to replace with an analogue-style responsiveness the irritatingly digital feel of animations that, once invoked, continue as they damn well please until the routine is finished.

There are still numerous areas in which increasingly analogue-style systems for videogames can be imagined. Exploration games might toy with the idea of environments that are more analogue. Rather than, for instance, having holes in walls that you either can or cannot get through, there might be holes that you could just about squeeze through if you left some equipment behind. Enemies in combat games, meanwhile, should behave according to their injuries. It's absurd if I can kill a guard by shooting him six times in the ankle; it's equally absurd if it doesn't affect him at all. But if he limped away, trailing blood, for backup, the gameworld would feel darker, more responsive and challenging.

The human brain is not a digital computer. Our experience in the world is continuous and complex: it is analogue. And videogames are becoming ever more interesting as they attempt to mimic this complexity of content and response. The old binary-state classics were good, but it's time to move on.



TRIGGER HAPPY

Steven Poole

Digital control: it's time to move on

Initially, electronic musicians welcomed the introduction of digital synthesizers since they furnished a cleanliness and purity of sound that simply had not been possible before. Analogue synthesizers went out of tune and broke down a lot. Digital synths didn't, and their new connection protocol (MIDI) offered a level of precise control that made entirely new sorts of music possible. Everyone seemed happy. For a while.

But gradually, dissatisfaction grew. The market in second-hand analogue synths boomed. People gradually came to agree that digital filters didn't sound as good as analogue filters, and they missed the variety of hands-on control that the old instruments, festooned with knobs and sliders, offered. Programming a digital synth by pressing buttons and observing the readout of a minuscule LCD screen just wasn't the same.

So in the mid-'90s, instrument manufacturers invented 'analogue modelling'. This was a kind of digital instrument that emulated the circuitry of an analogue synth entirely in software. You got the precise control and reliability of digital, with the sound of analogue.

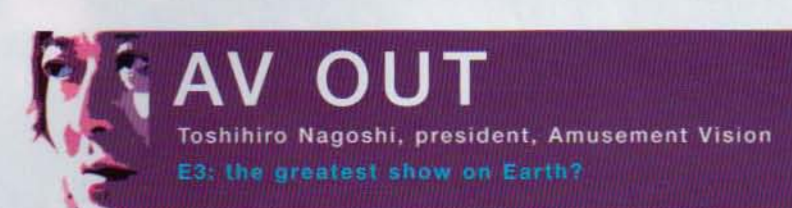
Think of the old arcade games that had a simple digital attitude to existence. One pixel in the wrong place and you lose a life

Steven Poole is the author of 'Trigger Happy: The Inner Life of Videogames' (Fourth Estate). Email: trighap@hotmail.com

Before and during the E3 show in Los Angeles, I was literally dead busy. Why was I so busy? Well in one word, I would have to say *F-Zero*. I guess that by the time you get this issue, screenshots and videos of the game will have already appeared on the Internet. I have to confess that making the E3 video sequence was quite a challenge. I can't tell you in detail how many people worked on it or how we did it, but what I can tell you is that we did it in under a month. I have to thank my staff for that. It may appear selfish from my point of view, but I have to tell you that it was quite a job and it's a great result we got. This month, I would like to tell you about the performance of Amusement Vision during E3 and my general feelings about the show this year.

However, first, at E3 I was told by many people that the *F-Zero* demo looked cool and impressive. It was held entirely on an NR-Disk (GameCube's 8cm DVD), running in realtime on a GameCube at 60fps. All the effects were in realtime, as well as the filtering, everything and, yes, in 60fps. It is not a CG film. It was like a standard in-game visual.





AV OUT

Toshihiro Nagoshi, president, Amusement Vision

E3: the greatest show on Earth?

To be honest, I would feel very sad if people thought this was a CG film. I mean we really did a hell of a lot of work on this demo. I really stressed the fact that I wanted the demo running at 60fps, with smooth animation and high-speed action. I will pay even more attention to keep it that way in the final playable version. Right now, we are hard at work on the game at Amusement Vision.

We are also working on another title that we demonstrated at E3: *Super Monkey Ball 2*. We were very happy to make it possible for E3. Why's that? Well, because people really enjoyed playing it. We added some new minigames as well as improving some of the old ones. It is becoming quite a cool title and I feel really relieved.

The improvement in the graphics is the other great point of this sequel. But at Amusement Vision, we are quite fast. I mean we released *Super Monkey Ball* and *Virtua Striker 3*, both on GameCube, and now we are working on *F-Zero*. This is quite a pace, believe me. So, okay, the improvement in graphics would appear logical with such an experience on GameCube, but I think that this title was one rank above others on the same platform during E3 in this particular point.

Well, what about the other titles? Let's start with GameCube. If we had to apply one description, one catch phrase. It would be, "The Empire strikes back." First, there are plenty of titles this time. *Metroid Prime* and *Star Fox Adventures* are very impressive but at last *Mario* and *Zelda* were here and they were quite an experience with a very rich and enjoyable content. Capcom and EA also had many A-class titles in playable versions for the show. These titles had a very solid impact, leaving users with the impression that they would be soon be able to play the games on their GameCubes.

Then Xbox. I would say… hard to describe… well, thinking hard I would say… no… well, it is hard to… I can't find a catchphrase. Well, this feeling is certainly the best way to describe the current situation for Xbox. It is not because it was lacking any impact during the show, not at all. Characters and action games, etc… there were a lot of games with quite an impressive technical achievement.

According to the image I have about Sony, I wish it would take more risks in delivering more original content

The will to make a successful online move was very strong on Xbox, maybe the strongest in the whole exhibition. However, there was nothing with a sufficient impact. It is a platform without enough original content. So, in contrast to Nintendo, it is still a new challenger in the industry. As a challenger, the console needs more impact. Perhaps I expect too much from Xbox.

Anyway, I felt it was a dynamic platform, and users were enjoying the titles. Yes, it was a very joyful booth and it had sufficient content to reassure users that the system is on the market to last. It just needs this impressive element to overcome the apparent lack of impact. I hope it will get it next year.

Now, PS2. It may sounds excessive, but I would use the word 'stability'. Strange? Traditionally, Sony has the image of being a trendsetter, or a challenger. But despite these images, I choose the word 'stability'. The reasons are found in its E3 line-up. There are many potential million-seller titles in the line-up and this is certainly what Xbox does not have yet. PS2 also has network-compatible projects in relation to the recently announced broadband unit compatible content. You have *Final Fantasy XI* but it doesn't have the impact of its predecessor. With the PS2 titles you have this feeling of, "Look at this one and, oh, this one too," but they are all from already visited patterns, nothing revolutionary.

In a sense, this is a very good marketing strategy (doing what sells) since users feel confident in their purchases, but you could expect this from Nintendo for instance. However, according to the image I have about Sony, I wish it would take more risks in delivering more original content. As the time passes, I have the feeling that all the images and impressions are getting the same. In that sense, I chose 'stability' to qualify Sony's E3. Well the fact that it also possesses around 70 per cent of the world's console market is another reason.

Well that was my impression of this year's E3. Well, in such a situation how is *F-Zero* going to evolve? What kind of answers are we going to deliver towards Xbox and PS2? I wish you could follow that from your perspective. This is not the dream we wished. Mine is still far from reality. My journey as creator is still very long. I hope to be able to give you the result of my work at next year's E3. Finally, I would like to thank all of the people who have given their support. There are indeed many people reading **Edge**. I'm so happy.

Toshihiro Nagoshi is president of Amusement Vision, formerly Sega subsidiary Soft R&D #4

Hello, this is Lupin Kojima from 'Game Wave DVD', Japan's only DVD-based videogame magazine. Since I started writing for **Edge** I have met many people, and at the start of March I received a surprising request. The BBC wanted to interview me. With the World Cup being held in Japan and South Korea, people are curious about the host countries' habits. The BBC wanted to show Japanese youth culture to its audience, quite a subject in any country, covering music, films, fashion, etc. But when it comes to Japan, you can't forget manga, animation and, of course, videogames. Matt Tiller, producer of a show called 'Japanorama', decided to interview me because of my column in **Edge** and, to be honest, this request was quite something for me. I was so excited.

Then the thrill turned to anxiety. Come the end of March, the translator and Matt came to meet me at my company, Enterbrain. Matt was a very cool guy.

Onimusha 2 is all about beautiful graphics and easy-to-learn gameplay. Despite the blade, it is... friendly.

There is also something else. The hero is Matsuda Yusaku, now deceased, yet you can still play as him, witness this legendary actor alive onscreen. This is only possible because it is a videogame. Is it because Japan is at the forefront of the game industry that we can have such project? I can't tell. But describing it as a game with samurai cutting monsters into pieces... I thought this wasn't the right image for the game, for videogames, and I intended to say this to Matt: "This is a game produced by a leading nation in the game industry, in which Japanese people can enjoy playing as the legendary actor, Matsuda Yusaku."

What defines Japanese videogames? I'm still not able to come up with a clear idea or image. If you consider online games, the overseas market is much advanced. There are many games from Japan

on the B button. Sometimes I remember moving my body as like the onscreen Mario while playing. And, yes, I also remember playing in my dreams.

Miyamoto-san's creations had a dramatic effect on the Japanese game industry. The hardware has changed again and again over all these years, but this very friendly style of gaming has not changed. I feel it on every console released in Japan. Is this the Japanese specificity after all? That everybody can enjoy the games, that they're so easy to grasp? For centuries, Japan has borne creators who are pure artisans, who pay a lot of attention, take care of making things. Also, they would research a lot to prepare their work. They would never be satisfied by what they just created, would aim at something even higher. The Japanese care like artisans. Okay, this is not true of everybody in Japan, of course, but when you consider the game creators here, you would find a great majority of them with this profile. Again, what



TOKYO GAME LIFE

Lupin Kojima, sub editor-in-chief, 'Game Wave DVD'

Japanese games: the friendliest in the world?

But I was worried. Shouldn't meeting him be the job of my company's PR section, especially Miss Yokose Michiru? And what if Matt comes to Enterbrain to date her? She is so cute. Still, the meeting went smooth and resulted in a very interesting interview.

During the interview, Matt often dropped the theme of samurai into the conversation. That made me uncomfortable. Okay, it's true there were samurai in Japan, long ago. But come on, this isn't modern Japan. I mean, do all Chinese people perform martial arts? I believe not. Do all English people look like punks? I'm sure they don't. Japan is samurai, sushi, or geisha. Will that image change anytime soon? It's disheartening, especially when you think about the modern things that Japan is so good at. When it comes to videogames, I think there is something that makes Japanese games so special. But what?

So, when Matt brought up samurai during the interview, I wanted to tell him about *Onimusha 2* on PlayStation2. The hero is based on an actor who is extremely well known in Japan. With his katana, he faces an army of monsters, slashing, slicing and hitting them. If you really think about it, this isn't a simple action game featuring a samurai as the hero:

which use, or are inspired by, technology developed abroad. So, is there a Japanese specificity in videogames? This may sound a little oversimplified, but when I think of all the games I've played so far, I can find only one element. When I play a Japanese game, I think it is fundamentally very 'friendly' to play.

makes Japanese games specific? I can't find one answer, but thinking globally, I would say it's an industry made of artisans delivering an experience which goes over the frontiers of their country, goes worldwide, touching an audience, from kids to adults, touching anybody. That sounds okay to me.

Starting with Miyamoto-san, Japan's top creators are able to deliver an experience, which is successful not only in Japan but also overseas

Starting with Miyamoto-san of Nintendo, Japan's top creators are able to deliver a gaming experience, which ends up being successful not only in Japan but also overseas. The same applies to Nagoshi-san of Amusement Vision, who also writes for **Edge**. People from a very large audience, kids to adults, can enjoy their gaming experience. Even if you don't speak the language, you can play instinctively. Regardless of gender or race, everybody can play.

When I was a kid, I could not stop playing Miyamoto-san's *Super Mario Brothers*. It was really addictive. When I wanted Mario to jump higher, I would press the A button several times. When I needed to run faster, I would press strongly

I've written all this, and now I hear that my interview from the BBC has been cut. It will not be on the air. It's sad, but there are some reasons inside my company... you have to follow work regulations. For example, I must remember this: don't sleep at the company. But I'm very sorry for Matt. I hope another time we will be able to speak about each other's countries over a few drinks. I can't stop thinking about the Japanese game industry, and I can't stop thinking about Miss Michiru. Does she have a boyfriend? Oh well. That's Tokyo Game Life.

Lupin Kojima is the sub editor-in-chief of 'Game Wave DVD', part of the Famitsu publishing portfolio

Edge's most wanted

Legend of Zelda
There was still some animosity towards Link's cel-shaded guise, but playable code revealed a game that should uphold the series' reputation for excellence.


(GameCube) Nintendo

Blinx
Initially resembling a fairly predictable Mario-clone, playable versions revealed a time manipulation gaming hook that might transform the genre.


(Xbox) Microsoft

TimeSplitters2
Causing a bit of a buzz among the assembled members of the gaming press, Free Radical has moved away from the multiplayer bent of the original.


(PlayStation2) Eidos

Doom III
By far the most talked about game of the show was id's latest opus, which surprisingly demonstrated significant design creativity and technical innovation.


(Activision) PC

E3 boasts strength in depth

But it's all looking a little bit predictable

On the pages that follow you won't find a complete list of the games that were on display at this year's E3. With around 400 exhibitors descending upon LA to show off over 1,000 new titles, that would be beyond the capacity even of **Edge** – and besides, there simply aren't enough pages in a single issue to include every single one. What you will find though, is the most comprehensive distillation of the show's highlights; our attempt to cram as many of the most intriguing, controversial, or just plain best examples of gaming software available at the event.

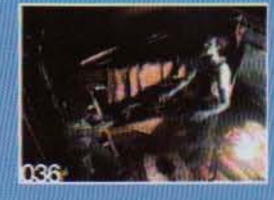
It wasn't an easy task condensing such a packed exhibition into just 37 pages. For a start, the trip to LA involved finding strange men in our beds (which is too long a story to go into detail here), and at our first attempt we found we had 87 pages of previews. And as ever, it was a considerable task to wade through the overwhelming amount of substandard or mediocre software that made up the bulk of the offering at E3.

Nevertheless, there was also a substantial top tier of genuinely excellent gaming prospects. The fact that it was difficult to pick out a single title that stood out above the rest was indicative of an impressive standard of overall distinction. Predictably, the firstparty GameCube line-up stood out, with a playable version of *Legend of Zelda* laying to rest last year's excitable scepticism, and titles such as *Super Mario Sunshine* and *Metroid Prime* demonstrating Nintendo's continued excellence. Meanwhile *Doom III* attested to the continued viability of the PC, while Sony's hardware offered a broad range of choice, even if there was no obvious killer app. And finally, Microsoft banished memories of last year's stuttering performance by showing off a solid line-up of imaginative and enjoyable titles such as *Blinx* and *Panzer Dragoon Orta*.

The sheer range and depth of quality on offer is a sure sign that the videogame industry is currently in rude health, a fact that's more than welcome after the last couple of lean transitional years. But at the risk of sounding overly pessimistic, the lack of genuine innovation on show is troubling. After all, the titles that generated the biggest buzz – titles like *Metal Gear Solid Substance*, *Doom III* and *Metroid Prime* – all stick to tried and tested formulas, and belong to existing franchises. To judge from E3, publisher conservatism appears to be at an all-time high. Which is not good for the long-term health of the industry.











Burnout 2: Point of Impact

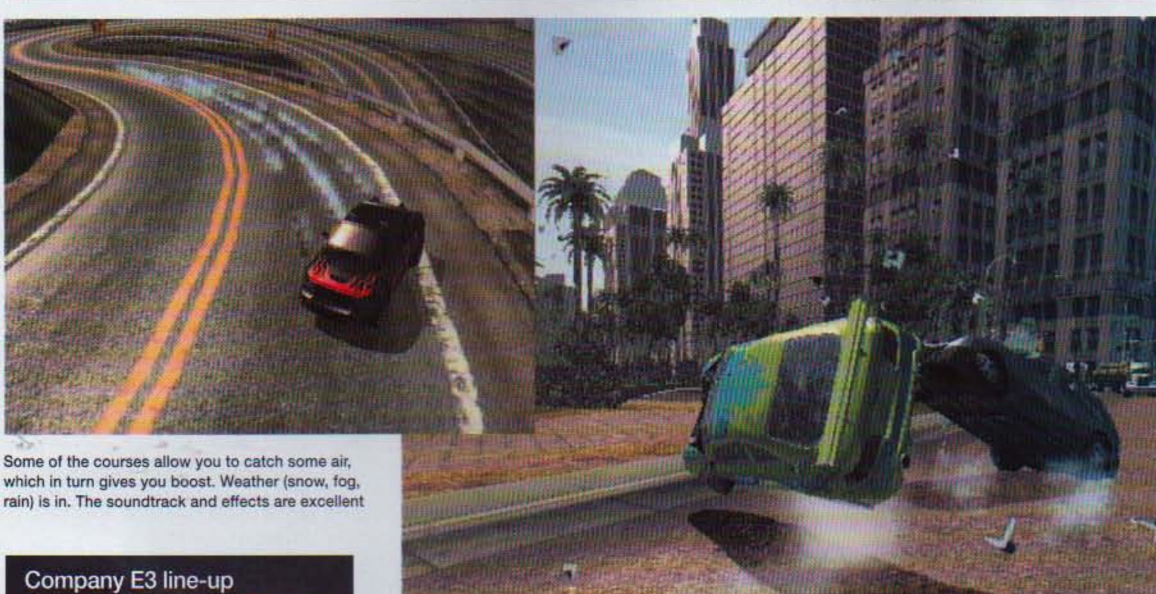
Format: PlayStatio
Publisher: Accla
Developer: Criterion Gam
Origin:
Release: Octo

Burnout, the only non-franchise title to make the big sellers list last year, is about to have all of its features overtaken by a swiftly-developed but ambitious successor









Some of the courses allow you to catch some air, which in turn gives you boost. Weather (snow, fog, rain) is in. The soundtrack and effects are excellent

Company E3 line-up

Acclaim showed off a decent line-up. *Turok Evolution* and *Vexx* continue to impress though neither showed remarkable advancement since **Edge** last looked at them. *Aggressive Inline*, the publisher's move into inline skating felt surprisingly good but is difficult to get excited about when the alternatives within the extreme sports scene are now numerous. Like Activision, a halfpipe took up much of the stand. Unlike Activision, the performers weren't well known. Except for Dave Mirra.





There's a distinct American feel to B That's not to say that the game fee great until you come to a corner ar realise your vehicle doesn't like anything that isn't straight (the genial handling model of *Burnout* returns, after all), rather that given th Eurocentric feel of the original, Acclaim may have put pressure on Criterion to follow a certain direction in order to maximise the commercial potential of this sequel in the US

Still, while you lose the Japanese track originally planned for *Burnout* you do get six US-inspired locations: a bayside city, a twisty coastal, an airport complex, a desert town, a snowy mountain pass road (which currently stands out as an excellent, demanding drive and a huge interstate system that links all of these together. In total, 32 stages are distributed among these and both circuit an point-to-point stretches are included.

The cars, too, have altered in focus with the main selection of 14 exhibiting more of a 'The Fast and the Furious' influence (incidentally, a custom series mode for modified models is included and **Edge** can attest to the ludicrous power of some of the machines). A further seven remain locked ar include police, 1950s hotrod, and stock cars

The main game adopts a points-based championship but extra modes are offered: Offensive Driving 101 teaches players how t 'Burn' their way around the track; Pursuit places you in a patrol in charge of ramming certain individuals off the road (a la *Chase HQ*); Runaway is one of several multiplayer options the team is currently toying with – no brakes and three busy junctions to get through in the shortest amount of time (othe include a Crash mode where players take turns at attempting to create the biggest collisions – as in the first game, chain reactions also count towards the score).

The crashes, too, are more ambitious. Damage is determined cumulatively, cars deform by mimicking the way metal behave in an accident. Wheels fly off, and a higher number of particle effects ensure things look more convincing than in the first game.

Finally, there's been substantial visual enhancements. The detail of the traffic is no at the level of *Burnout*'s main car and your vehicle has obviously improved again. In addition, the environments are of a grander nature with specular lighting making a significant difference.

Doom III

Format: **PC**
Publisher: **Activision**
Developer: **id Software**
Origin: **US**
Release: **2003**

id's seminal sequel proves to be a technical tour de force, using ATI chip technology to wow showgoers and win plenty of plaudits

The significance of the massive queues that snaked round Activision's stand, of showgoers eager to get a glimpse of the hotly awaited sequel to id's paradigmatic FPS, can be overstated – after all, one of the defining characteristics of E3 is that attendees will queue for anything. But the approbation that followed screenings of a teaser trailer video was telling, and many of those who had queued up were quick to label *Doom III* the game of the show. As many people pointed out, the game has strong survival horror overtones, but to call the game a firstperson version of *Resident Evil*, as many did, is to understate what id seems to have achieved.

The video kicked off with an engaging cut-scene sequence depicting a traitorous scientist unleashing demonic forces, and followed with extensive in-game footage that id was keen to point out featured "no tricks." The company's technical achievement was evident from the outset, with sequences of play clearly designed to illustrate sophisticated lighting techniques and incredible transparent reflections, and an overall visual quality that isn't far from matching Square's *Final Fantasy* film. The engine also allows realtime mixing of a 5.1 channel ambient soundtrack which is provided once again by Trent Reznor.

The most impressive aspect of the video was the deeply immersive sense of atmosphere that id seems to have achieved. Set-piece encounters are ushered in with foreboding cut-scenes after which the camera swims menacingly back into firstperson view, and are combined with respawning and randomly placed creatures to recreate the adrenaline-fuelled sense of urgency and fear that characterised the original. The impact of being hit by an enemy is engineered to create a powerful feeling of aversion, thanks to a horribly distressing camera jolt and vision blur, while horrific trails of blood, incredibly detailed creature models and a claustrophobic sense of enclosure are equally unsettling.

Doubts may remain about id's ability to create a powerful singleplayer game, since the company's design strengths have traditionally been more technical and geared towards a multiplayer experience. But though multiplayer is initially restricted to a limited deathmatch mode, the signs are good – particularly as the whole game has been storyboarded with the assistance of Matt Costello, the writer of *The 7th Guest* and *11th Hour*. **Edge** just hopes our games PC will be up to running *Doom III* when it's released next year.













Having driven the last few generations of firstperson shooters by outsourcing successive iterations of Doom and Quake engines to developers who don't have the time or the talent to match John Carmack's technical expertise, id Software has already licensed out the new engine to Raven Software, which is said to be hard at work on the next chapter of *Quake*

Company E3 line-up

Like many other stands at E3, Activision's output was characterised by significant quality, but, *Doom III* and *Medieval Total War* aside, a worrying lack of creative imagination. In particular, *Wolverine's Revenge* looked like a solid blend of stealth and action, while *Blade II* boasted plenty of claret. A real-life halfpipe allowed the company's plentiful roster of extreme sports to shine, while rather bizarrely, *Medieval Total War* attracted celebrity fan Robin Williams (who apparently still knows his stuff) to the event.

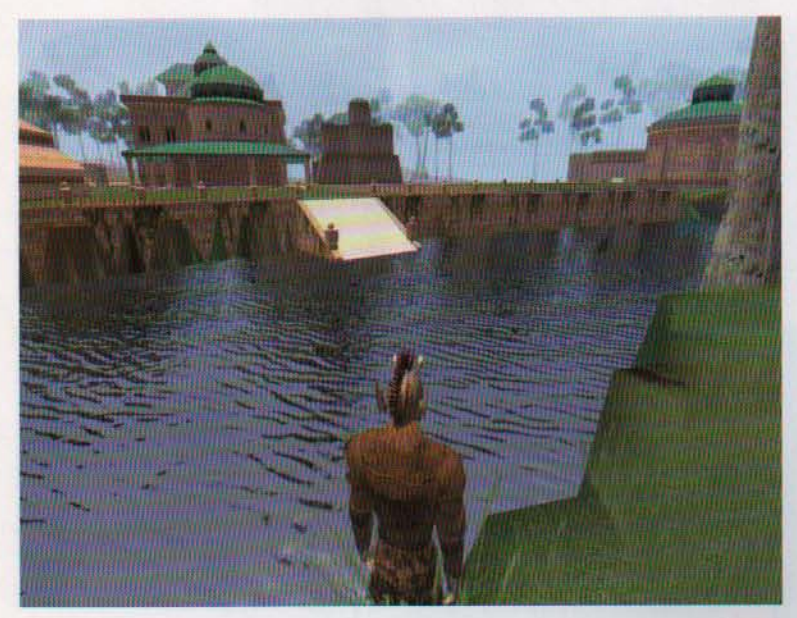


According to id, Xbox is theoretically capable of running *Doom III*, but with the E3 demo running on next-generation ATI technology, it would require some serious programming trickery to get it looking like this

Star Wars Galaxies: An Empire Divided

Format: **PC, PS2, Xb**
Publisher: **LucasA**
Developer: **Sony Online Entertainme**
Origin: **U**
Release: **December (PC), TBC (PS2, Xbo**

Sony Online's sumptuously authentic virtual 'Star Wars' universe gets ready to receive its first shipment of intergalactic travellers



Judging by their appearance at E3, both *The Clone Wars* and *Bounty Hunter* are somewhat less than inspiring, so it was left to *Star Wars Galaxies* and *Knights of the Old Republic* to show that LucasArts does have the capacity to mine the rich potential of its most lucrative licence. Although the streets of Tatooine were eerily empty when *Galaxies* was demonstrated, the game's release will inevitably lead to a characteristic proliferation of scum and villainy, because despite the preponderance of imminent MMRPGs, the 'Star Wars' licence is at the heart of a particularly sweet spot when it comes to the game's target demographic.

Indeed there's already a community of over 125,000 fans active at the game's Website (www.starwarsgalaxies.com) which is a testament to the authenticity with which SOE is attempting to recreate the 'Star Wars' universe. As was to be expected after last year's teaser screenshots, it's graphically exquisite. Taking place after the destruction of the Death Star at the Battle of Yavin, *Galaxies* allows players to choose fror eight races, ranging from the well known, such as Wookie, Rodian and Twi'lek, to thos that haven't been heavily featured in the films such as Bothan and Zabrak.

A variety of vehicles, droids and pets car all be acquired, though interstellar flight will have to wait until the game's first scheduled expansion, planned for late 2003. In the meantime, interplanetary travel will only be available through scheduled flights. And though combat will form a significant part of the game, it isn't the dominant part, so players will be able to opt out of player-versus-player conflict if they wish. Assuming they don't, it's possible to join either the Rebel Alliance or the Empire and get involve at the heart of the epic struggle that provide the backdrop to the original trilogy.

It's likely to be this attention to detail, combined with a wide ranging ease of interface that's likely to ensure the ongoing success of *Galaxies*, particularly if the developer is successful in its attempt to ensure a parity between casual and hardcor subscribers. It's certainly one of the strongest cards in LucasArts' hand.



LucasArts intends to reward casual users of *Galaxies* just as much as those more willing to devote substantial proportions of their lives to it

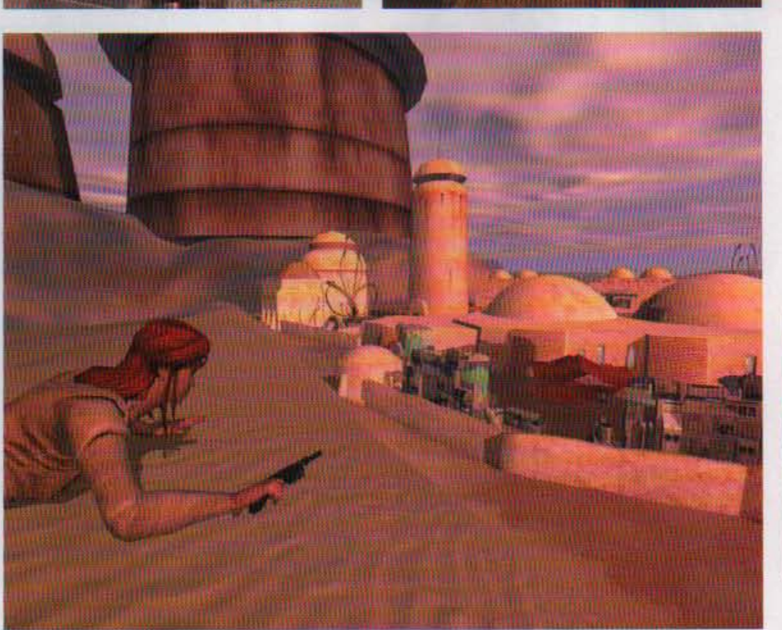




Although the beautifully wrought environments are currently strangely empty, expect them to fill with bustle the moment the game goes on general release

Franchise development

After getting off to a slightly underwhelming start, the decision taken by LucasArts to outsource development to talented developers looks more likely to pay off now that Sony Online Entertainment (of *EverQuest* fame) and BioWare (developer of *Baldur's Gate*) are nearing completion of their 'Star Wars' titles. After the disappointment of *Star Wars Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast*, *Star Wars Galaxies: An Empire Divided* and *Star Wars Knights of the Old Republic* each look likely to do justice to the magnitude of the licence, and herald a return to form for the publisher.





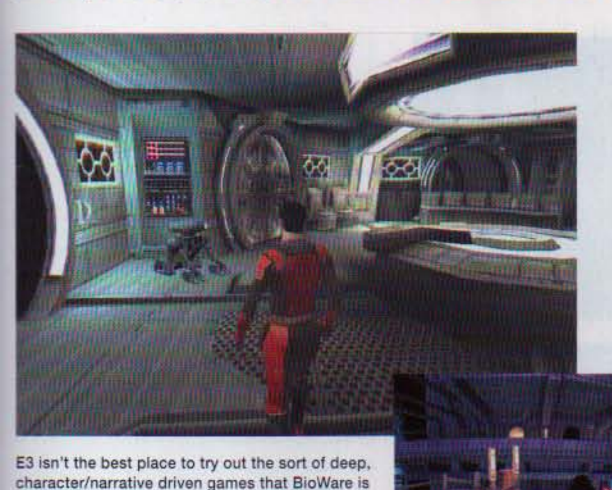
A range of camera views mirror the variety of playing styles that the developer has supported

Star Wars Knights of the Old Republic

Format: **Xbox, PC**
Publisher: **LucasArts**
Developer: **BioWare**
Origin: **US**
Release: **Autumn (Xbox), Spring 2003 (PC)**

Previously in **E**109

As the latest 'Star Wars' film bids goodnight to the Republic, BioWare attempts to usher in a new dawn for LucasArts: an involving RPG



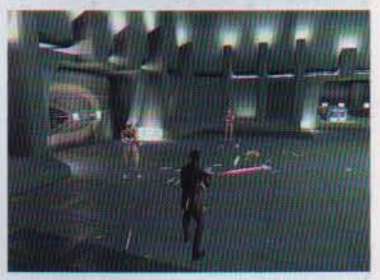
E3 isn't the best place to try out the sort of deep, character/narrative driven games that BioWare is so excellent at creating, but even so, anyone prepared to spend time with the playable demo could see the immense potential of *Knights*

Star Wars Knights of the Old Republic* was one of three titles singled out by Ed Fries at Microsoft's pre-E3 press conference, and with good reason. Although the E3-shortened attention spans and hyper-accelerated appointment schedules meant that some attendees were left cold by what is, after all, a deep and involving game, **Edge** remains optimistic about BioWare's ability to deliver a compelling blend of narrative and character development, and a balanced mix of puzzles and action.

Certainly the game's combat control scheme, which is based on programmable moves, was difficult to master in the short time available at the show, but the playable demo revealed some well-balanced conundrums. One such sequence saw the use of a computer hacking skill, just one part of an extensive skill-based system that builds on around 30 different types of character templates to allow for varying styles of gameplay.

In addition, the promotional video shown Microsoft's press conference hinted at the enormous scale of *Knights of the Old Republic*, and illustrated several intriguing minigame set-pieces that will punctuate the main body of the game – such as laser turret sequences that are strongly reminiscent of scenes in 'A New Hope'. A card game is also likely to be included to keep gambling scoundrels such as **Edge** happy.





The promo video shown at Microsoft's pre-E3 press conference hinted at the inclusion of minigames – including a combat game (top)

Rally Fusion: Race of Champions

Format: **PS2, Xbox, GC**
Publisher: **Activision**
Developer: **Climax UK**
Origin: **UK**
Release: **Q3**

Climax shows off its technically accomplished rally title (one of the nicer looking examples at E3) and backs it up with a decent structure







The damage model is as accomplished as the visuals but the handling could perhaps benefit from a very slight reworking. Then again, it may simply be a question of having more time with it

Inspired by the annual event that pits all forms of motorsport professionals against each other on a super-special rally stage on the island of Gran Canaria, *Race of Champions* initially attracted players through its impressive visuals. The quality of the vehicles (around 20 of the videogaming rally classics appear to have made the cut) is notable and even on PS2 the resolution appears crisp. Striking too, is the comprehensive damage model of which **Edge** got plenty of opportunities to notice.

This is partly because of the handling. It is, as you'd expect from Climax, realism-heavy and you can certainly feel the cars react to hard braking before bends, unsettling the chassis' equilibrium, and offering something of a challenge. **Edge** would have to play the game more substantially and in quieter surroundings to be sure, but the feeling is that if there is an area of *Race of Champions* that would benefit from a little tweaking in order to improve playability, this is it.

And fear not: just because the game focuses on one event, the developer has obviously remembered to include more tracks – expect about 20 to make the final version. But more interesting than the number of roads are the events on offer: hill climb, rallycross, relay (exactly what it sounds like), follow the leader (where the last car at the end of each lap gets eliminated), and checkpoint racing should certainly ensure that things remain interesting.

Resident Evil 0

Format: GameCu
Publisher: Capco
Developer: In-hou
Origin: Jap
Release: Autumn (Japan), TBC (U

Get set to return to Raccoon City with Rebecca Chambers in Capcom's GameCube-exclusive prequel to seminal survival horror series







Capcom's proprietary background animation technology appears to have been used to good effect, managing to exceed the visual excellence of the previous outing for the series on GameCube

Company E3 line-up

Resident Evil 0 is the first GameCube-exclusive title to appear after the recent re-imagining of the original *Resident Evil*. Despite the latter's slightly disappointing retail performance in Japan, Capcom remains committed to Nintendo's hardware, stressing that the exclusivity arrangement was a mutual one, and pointing to a shared philosophy between Shigeru Miyamoto and Shinji Mikami. *Resident Evil 4* is another sequel that will be exclusive to the platform. It was a decent E3 showing for Capcom, with new games and playable code of previously video-only titles on offer.





Originally conceived as an N64 title, the GameCube version of *Resident Evil 0* shares little with early version of the game apart from the overall design. It's since been redeveloped from the ground up with Nintendo's hardware in mind, allowing Capcom to achieve stunning levels of graphical representation while throwing in on or two gameplay twists to add a novel element to the company's tried and tested survival horror formula. Like the GameCube remake of *Resident Evil*, with which it was designed concurrently, it will come on two disks. One of the game's protagonists, Rebecca Chambers will be familiar to players of the original *Resident Evil*, while Billy Coen, convict on the run, is new to the series.

According to **Hiroyuki Kobayashi**, the game's producer, the most technically challenging part of the game to develop was the opening span, which takes part on a moving train. "There's an incredible numbe of elements in motion: the train is running and everything is vibrating inside; bottles standing on tables vibrate and the same goes for the curtains on the windows; and the light is filtered at high speed while the train is in motion. It's even raining." In a bid to depict this level of detail, the developer collaborated closely with Nintendo to come up with a proprietary technology for animated backgrounds.

These backgrounds are still prerendered, but as Kobayashi-san points out, "The benefit of this technique is that you can have a global view of your location, not just reduced to the field of vision through your eyes. So combining sound effects and background animations you can offer a very tense atmosphere."

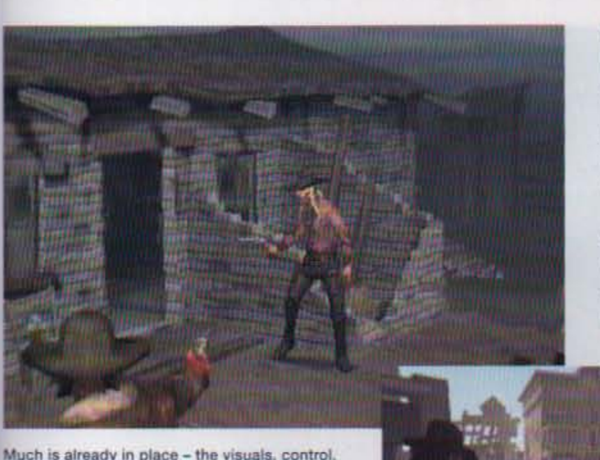
The core gameplay novelty is provided b the 'Partner Zapping' system, which allows players to switch between the two playable characters at will. Certain puzzles require the characters to be used in combination, while throughout the game, players can choose to have the second character played by one of several different AI settings.

The other new feature is that there will b no item boxes. Instead, items that are set down on the ground will simply remain there to be picked up when needed. Not radical departures, granted, but if it ain't broke (and *Resident Evil* clearly demonstrated that it ain't), why fix it?

Red Dead Revolver

Format: **PlayStation2**
Publisher: **Capcom**
Developer: **Angel Studios**
Origin: **US**
Release: **Winter**

Raised by Indians, Red returns to seek revenge on the desperados who slaughtered his family. If only he could see where he's shooting



Much is already in place – the visuals, control, ambience and, as far as **Edge** can tell, mission structure (a little diversity wouldn't hurt, though the final game may include other elements) – but the camera needs a lot of work

Given the popularity of western films, it's odd to find only a restricted selection of videogames themed around the genre after 40 years of electronic entertainment. The potential for an atmospheric shooter, be it third or firstperson, is massive. Indeed, if games were judged on ambience alone, *Red Dead Revolver* would have nothing to worry about – Capcom's thirdperson adventure captures the mood of Sergio Leone's best work with impressive ease.

Sadly it fails to match the director's masterful cinematography, opting instead for what is possibly the worst example of camera work of the games featured in this section. This wouldn't be so particularly frustrating were it not for the fact that other elements appear already in place: plenty of action; a targeting system that facilitates fast continuous shooting (particularly satisfying when using a twin pistol combination); a nimble and well animated main character; promising enemy AI; neat graphical touches and an appropriate selection of artillery and fourplayer deathmatch options.

If Angel Studios can persuade the camera to be friendlier and ensure the gameplay offers a little more variety than that found in the E3 demo then all is forgiven. In the meantime, **Edge** will continue to wonder how the character running around with a stick of dynamite sticking out of his backside got himself in that situation.





The targeting system isn't shown in these shots but imagine multiple areas of outlaws' bodies being automatically highlighted, *Virtua Cop* style

Auto Modellista

Format: **PlayStation2**
Publisher: **Capcom**
Developer: **In-house**
Origin: **Japan**
Release: **Q4**

Previously in **E**106

The first playable version of Capcom's beautiful racer enters the videogame racing circuit and instantly makes an impression. But not the right one







Graphics alone won't suffice. *Auto Modellista* needs urgent attention to its handling dynamic or it may turn out one of the most uninteresting racing games to have appeared in recent years

Having shown much potential at last year's Tokyo Game Show, despite only appearing in video form, *Auto Modellista* promises racing circuit, cityscape and mountain pass environments for one or two players as well as tuning and online elements (the latter currently under consideration for the EU version).

Two options were available to the E3 crowds: an oval test track and a Tokyo night time circuit. That you could manage all of the former's bends without once easing off the accelerator was slightly alarming but not entirely out of character given the venue's open layout. The fact that no deceleration was required to negotiate the Tokyo route, however, was shocking. There was no need to stop pressing the x button, even when facing near 90-degree corners – the car's tyres simply refused to let go of the tarmac. Impressive adhesive performance, sure, but hardly exciting.

Sources at E3 indicated that an earlier version had proved more demanding (and therefore more involving) but they were at a loss to explain the change of direction evident in this show demo.

On current form, then, Capcom is on track to develop one of the world's most beautiful racers with plenty of attractive touches (for example, the exhaust moves independently from the chassis). But unless drastic action is taken regarding its handling dynamic, it may also turn out to be one of the most insipid.

TOCA Race Driver

Format: **PS2, PC, Xb**
Publisher: **Codemast**
Developer: **In-hou**
Origin: **U**
Release: **August (PS2), Q3 (PC), TBC (Xbo**
Previously in **E**101, **E**10

There was little opportunity to evaluate the game's much anticipated plot-driven element but the technical aspects certainly appear in place











Edge first encountered the PS2 version of *Race Driver* at the SCEE conference, the day before E3 opened its doors. That particular demo offered the chance to tame an Australian AVESCO V8 Supercar around the Adelaide track. It took two or three corners to get to grips with the handling but at least that allowed the chance to check out the damag system – hit the tyre barriers enough times (c with enough force) and body panels go flying off, occasionally with a wheel for company, and different areas of the vehicle appear to crumple in a variety of ways, making everything look rather convincing.

But back to the handling model. Clearly influenced by an authentic simulation but tweaking enough elements to ensure it remains playable via a joypad, this was one c the best racing games **Edge** tried at E3. Approach it in 'arcade racer' mode and you'l get nowhere – you must observe the fundamentals of race technique and if you do you're rewarded with an intuitive experience.

That's not to say it's overly clinical and only a passionless, Hakkinen-styled drive ensures results. **Edge** was pleased to try the game again two days later, this time with a force feedback wheel on PC, and find that you can play around with getting the back end out on corners and still be in contention this isn't a dry high-end simulation where on technically-perfect racing is rewarded. Obviously some work is required but it's no more demanding than previous *TOCA* game the dynamics of which **Edge** has previously praised as being examples of an extremely well balanced approach.

Company E3 line-up

From Edge's perspective, Codemasters had a good show even if some of its software had already been seen recently and no surprises were on offer. Still, it was good to finally get to see *TOCA* moving properly and always a pleasure to catch up with *Colin*. Those two understandably stole most of the attention but anyone managing to get past the stand's fiery receptionist would have noticed *LMA Manager* and *Dragon Empires* (see Alphas) also promising big things.



Another Codemasters *TOCA* success story looks assured as far as the (challenging but fair) racing model is concerned. **Edge** looks forward to finding out just how well the story element has been implemented



TimeSplitters2

Format:	**PS2, Xbox, GC**
Publisher:	**Eidos**
Developer:	**Free Radical Design**
Origin:	**UK**
Release:	**September**

Previously in **E99**, **E102**, **E106**

The excellent multiplayer mode has already convinced those who tried it in LA. Thankfully, the singleplayer side of things looks equally enthralling



Look closely and you can catch a glimpse of the massive boss you must face in the Notre Dame level once you reach the cathedral's upper floors (above)



Content-wise, little has changed since **Edge** last visited Free Radical Design in its Nottingham office. The singleplayer and cooperative story mode remains in place; there are still nine stages, each with its individual temporal setting and around 80 characters to go with them; the multiplayer mode – the essence of the original game, let's not forget – has been enhanced to allow even more customisation; so has the Mapmaker option; and up to eight consoles can be linked together via iLink (on PS2, at least).

But now the game is obviously also coming for GC and Xbox. **Edge** was shown the three versions at E3 and the quality of Eidos' plasma displays made it difficult to distinguish between them, although the Xbox interpretation does boast differences in texture, shading and reflection effects.

The game strives to mix different styles of play so that in the 1932 Chicago level, for instance, you set off in what is initially a stealth-reliant section before being asked to escort a civilian, and ensure you eliminate any of the enemies trying to gun him down.

Edge was also shown the unfinished monkey-populated Aztec level. With elements such as the AI still to be implemented FRD director David Doak, who was demoing the game at the time, took the opportunity to shoot every simian in view with as many arrows from his crossbow as ammunition levels would allow. The sight of some of the poor creatures running around with sticks of wood poking out of their agile frames haunts **Edge** to this day. 

Company E3 line-up

While the Lara Croft model attracted the usual crowds, the actual game area for the latest *Tomb Raider* title was rather discreet – a reflection of what was shown, presumably. In addition to the exciting line-up showcased here (*Praetorians* hasn't made it but it's looking promising) – and Eidos did benefit from one of most consistent stands of the show – *Fear Effect 3: Inferno* was shown but only in video form.



TS2 boasts some lovely lighting effects and includes plenty of additional touches the team keeps adding to the game. Expect plenty more until the submission date turns up

Commandos 3

Format: P
Publisher: Eido
Developer: Pyro Studio
Origin: Spa
Release: June 200

Massive explosions and exquisite environments. The E3 trailer for the latest sequel to Pyro Studios' popular strategy WWII game certainly enthuses



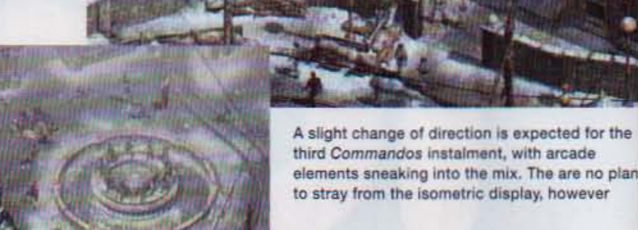


Still set around European scenarios, *Commandos 3* utilises an enhanced version of the *Commandos 2* engine (the team feels 3D isn't the right approach for this type of game). There are currently no plans to add new playable characters, although a considerable number of new abilities and items are included. In addition, new enemies and level bosses also make an appearance.

Rather than being mission-based, the game now centres on three stories which evolve as you play through them. There are new situations for you to face: ambush an enemy general in the streets of Berlin, face relentless Russian forces in Stalingrad, lead your 15-man platoon out of Omaha Beach, or eliminate a rather lively sniper (inspired by the film 'Enemy at the Gates'), to name but four.

Enemy AI is said to have also been improved with higher activity and behaviour variety than in the game's predecessor (in the same way as *Commandos 2* moved on from the first title). To compensate, there is more of a realtime slant to the action.

Finally, a deathmatch mode is expected with players taking on the role of both Allied and enemy forces. However, the developer isn't saying much about that for the moment. Besides, it has got another three games to be getting on with.



A slight change of direction is expected for the third *Commandos* instalment, with arcade elements sneaking into the mix. The are no plan to stray from the isometric display, however

Hitman 2: Silent Assassin

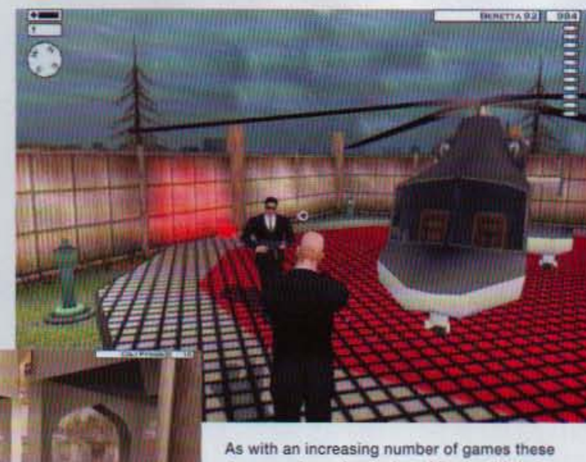
Format: PC, PS2, Xbo
Publisher: Eido
Developer: Io Interacti
Origin: Denma
Release: Septemb

Previously in E1

The genetically engineered assassin returns armed with new locations, weapons and enhancements to hopefully eliminate any of the prequel's weaknesses

Edge will spare you the plot but as Codename 47 you have to negotiate 20 missions set in Sicily, Malaysia, India, Japan and Russia (to name five of the various locations). While every mission allows completion with solely the execution of your target, the game will also happily accommodate those preferring a more Schwarzenegger approach. If stealth is your thing, however, *Hitman 2* certainly rewards the more considered player. The level **Edge** was shown (on PC) required you to gain entrance to an enemy installation. After studying the pattern of the surrounding patrols and peaking through keyholes, a guard was disabled, his body hidden, his clothes borrowed and the guns smuggled into one of the crates that were being taken in to the compound from a delivery van parked outside its gates to be retrieved later.

The developer has listened to criticism of the first game and has made the necessary adjustments. Included now are the choice of first or thirdperson perspective at all times, the ability to save your progress midway through a sortie and an enhanced inventory system that lets you keep the weapons you acquire in one mission to then be used in subsequent outings – every found item is kept in your collection rather than lost once you complete your task. Interesting too, is the addition of non-lethal armament such as chloroform, poison darts and stun guns.







As with an increasing number of games these days, you have the choice of first or thirdperson perspectives at any time during the game. The E3 demo didn't highlight any areas of main concern (main grab is PC, top right is Xbox, right is PS2)

The Lord of the Rings, The Two Towers

Format: **PlayStation2**
Publisher: **Electronic Arts**
Developer: **Redwood Shores/Stormfront Studios**
Origin: **US**
Release: **Autumn (US), TBC (UK)**

EA seeks to banish memories of the disappointing cinematic outing by producing a film tie-in that's actually quite good

If the sequel to Peter Jackson's 'Fellowship of the Ring' film maintains the box office trajectory of the first instalment in the trilogy, the commercial success of EA's videogame tie-in will be inevitable. So it's heartening to find that *The Lord of the Rings, The Two Towers*, which is based on the first two movies in the series, may actually be quite good. It certainly attracted a lot of attention at E3, thanks to an adroitly engineered demo that hinted at a satisfyingly immediate play mechanic.

The game allows players to step into the shoes of Aragorn, Legolas or Gimli over the course of 16 missions that take place in locations drawn from the first two films, such as the Mines of Moria and Helm's Deep. Swarming Orcish hordes provide the main opposition, though there are also five boss encounters, including one with a Cave Troll and indeed Saruman himself.

The demo on display at E3 gave some hint of the "tactical gameplay system" that EA claims is at the heart of the game. Playing as Aragorn through a sequence drawn from the conflict at Helm's Deep, gameplay was ostensibly similar to the hack 'n' slash action of the *Dynasty Warriors* series, but with a greater emphasis on bombastic set-pieces. And like *Dynasty Warriors*, it was also necessary to react to tactical developments elsewhere: fighting through waves of Orcish attackers, avoiding flaming boulders raining from the skies, dispatching enemies with a variety of manoeuvres, to assist Gimli and Legolas, for example.

It was a fairly brief sequence, and obviously tailored to demonstrating the game's strengths in the short time available at E3, but it succeeded in raising **Edge**'s hopes for the finished product.

Company E3 line-up

The 31 titles on display at the Electronic Arts stand unsurprisingly represented a formidable statement of the company's commercial intent. As a rival publisher pointed out to Edge, a significant proportion of the titles on display are inevitably going to do well at retail, providing the company with an immensely bankable release schedule in the build up to Christmas. More surprising was the creative strength of the line-up. Lucrative cash-ins aside (such as Harry Potter, The Simpsons and Lego), titles such as *Madden NFL 2003, James Bond 007 NightFire, Battlefield 1942, SimCity 4, The Sims Online* and *Mace Griffin Bounty Hunter* all impressed.











Although these screenshots give some hint of the range of environments featured in the final game, playable demos at E3 also provided plenty of evidence that the heady blend of freeform combat and set-piece action can wow the crowds

Command & Conquer: Generals

Format: PC
Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: EA (Pacific
Origin: US
Release: December

A new developer but a tried-and-tested formula for the latest episode of Westwood's signature franchise wins plaudits behind closed doors

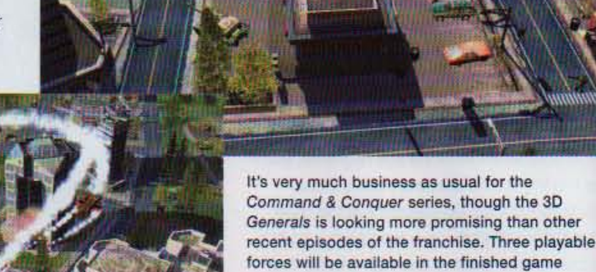




Having flown the Westwood stable (albeit along with a few *C&C* veterans), does *Command & Conquer: Generals* see the venerable RTS shrugging off its past? Well, more embracing the future. While the series' infamous Am Dram FMV sequences (a mad dictator's 'me and my Web cam') have been ditched for CGI, and *C&C* has again followed *Dune*'s footsteps in going 3D, it retains fanciful rewrites of world history, point-and-click buggies and repetition of the phrase "construction's complete."

The extra dimension is more evident in explosive graphics than gameplay. Perhaps the somewhat choreographed E3 demo (a diplomatic buggy is ambushed by terrorists in a crowded Arabic market) might not have been achieved without the more intricate level building 3D makes possible; whether such intermissions will spoil what's always been an admirably freeform game remains to be seen. Talk of buildings collapsing correctly and so damaging other buildings – undemonstrated at the show – is more hopeful.

The game's traditional armoury now comes in three distinct flavours – the fire-and-forget US force, the voluminous Red Army and the catch-em-if-you-can GLO terrorists. Choosing pre-battle between three generals adds further variation (the US air force commander, for instance, can call in air strikes). All promising enhancements to a too long unbroken, and thus unfixed, formula.



It's very much business as usual for the *Command & Conquer* series, though the 3D *Generals* is looking more promising than other recent episodes of the franchise. Three playable forces will be available in the finished game

James Bond 007: NightFire

Format: PS2, Xbox, GC
Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: Eurocom
Origin: UK
Release: Q3

A collection of the best moments from the last 40 years of Ian Fleming's favourite spy, NightFire looks likely to rescue EA's Bond games-related (creative) record

It seems somehow appropriate that the developer responsible for the best James Bond FPS since EA first got the licence (*The World is Not Enough*) should be the one to return looking capable of delivering one of the better 007 games of recent times.

Some ten levels are expected and take classic scenes from the films as inspiration – mountain hideouts and space-set compounds are just two of a varied selection. From what **Edge** saw, the developer is making an effort to ensure the tasks also vary, and some thought has gone into the settings (you get to negotiate the space station in zero gravity, which is a nice touch). You're also offered various approaches to the missions in an attempt to remove some of the linearity you would otherwise experience, and interestingly the view automatically switches to thirdperson for certain sections.

You also get to play around with vehicles. None of the five levels focusing on Bond's need for speed were shown at E3 but there is talk of an Aston Martin that metamorphoses into a submarine or snowmobile. And it's said to be just one of many.

At E3 things looked on track. Control felt surprisingly responsive and failed to display any worrying trends while the technical aspect of the game appeared under control. **Edge** plans to keep an eye on this one.



Five years on and still no one has (or looks to) come close to producing a James Bond FPS that matches, let alone betters, the sublime *GoldenEye*





RE (working title)

Format: **Xbox**
Publisher: **Infogrames**
Developer: **Milestone**
Origin: **Italy**
Release: **Christmas**

The maker of the acclaimed Screamer Rally emerges from the pits with a new and rather promising racer

On paper, the main premise sounds wonderfully liberating – create your own car, starting from scratch. In practice, your choices appear somewhat restricted. For instance, the aesthetic is limited to one of 15 models (created by winners of a competition aimed at students from real British, Spanish, French, and Italian car design schools) and the selection relating to mechanical decisions is also likely to come from a pre-selected menu. Even so, it's an interesting concept and one that should work as long as the player is offered a healthy number of alternatives.

The menu screens have essentially been reworked as three-dimensional environments and are evolutionary – so while you begin in humble surroundings, once you start winning races you move into a better garage. Further options open up accordingly so that, for example, you are able to hire a receptionist, or a production manager to ensure you meet the demands of your clientele (one of the advantages of racing success is that people place orders for the model you have created, which in turn allows for further development). The idea is to engross the player in to the game, to get you to feel as though you're part of the entire process of a standalone racing outfit (there are nice touches such as seeing your car logo appearing on billboards around racetracks as your popularity increases).

Ultimately, however, this represents only 20 per cent of the game. *RE* is first and foremost about racing. Currently running six cars on track and at an unoptimised 25fps (60fps is promised), **Edge** found the handling to be most agreeable and certainly from the *GT* school of car dynamics. A better sense of speed is required (the better framerate should help) but the quality of the environments shown (city and mountain, although circuit and stadium speedway also exist), along with the 10,000 polygon vehicles certainly leave little to worry about visually.









Apologies for the dull shots (showing two of the 50 tracks) but licensing issues apparently prevent any of the 12 real cars from being shown. The models are divided into Roadster, Sportscar, Supercar and Dream car (your own creation) with three evolution modes (street, tuning, competition). Damage is cosmetic only





Company E3 line-up

The French giant's obsession with the mass market ensured (too) many exploitative licences were present but of the titles that **Edge** concerned itself with, *Stuntman* (p46) had its moments while *Battle Engine Aquila* and *Neverwinter Nights* appeared to be shaping up nicely, as was a playable *TransWorld Snowboarding*.

Unreal Championship

Format: Xbox
Publisher: Infogrames
Developer: Digital Extremes
Origin: Canada
Release: Autumn

Previously in E107

Solid but not spectacular is the current verdict on Unreal's first original console foray





It's a key title for the Xbox but *Unreal Championship* was a bit of a disappointment at E3. The few levels on display were extremely robust in terms of gameplay but the feeling generated was one of retrospection, looking back to the days of *Unreal Tournament* rather than the forthcoming PC games *Unreal II* and *UT2003*.

The promised vehicles and exotic weapons, such as the satellite ion cannon or cooperative firepower, were notable in their absence. Instead old favourites like the flak cannon and rocket launcher were included, though they have been slightly tweaked; the flak cannon's power having been toned down and the alternative grenade fire option removed. Showfloor players also seemed confused by the default close-in hammer weapon, which when fired gives a visual effort similar to the green blob of the biorifle. Another concern was the dull grey hue of one of the deathmatch levels, though other areas were more impressive.

That said, Microsoft played a joker with a six-booth online set-up on the Xbox stand, which used the integrated voice and headset hardware, Sidewinder Game Voice, to great effect. This included some comedy filters to turn the taunts of the victors and the cries of the vanquished into helium squeaks. There were constant queues to play there, although the game was also tucked away on the Infogrames stand for those with the initiative to seek it out.



Everything is more or less as you'd expect but the real attraction is how the online aspects will enhance the game for the Xbox-owning crowd

Stuntman

Format: PlayStation2
Publisher: Infogrames
Developer: Reflections
Origin: UK
Release: September

Previously in E99, E102, E107

It certainly drew the crowds, although most Americans appeared confused about having to negotiate tight bends. Jumping off ramps, however, they understood...

The driving model on some of the vehicles feels decidedly sluggish and wouldn't be worth mentioning if it didn't occasionally get in the way of the gameplay. Of the vehicles **Edge** tried, however, most felt fine on the ground but (accidental) mid-air collisions tended to produce some rather frenetic movement from the car, thus removing some of the realism.

Admittedly the above instances were rare, allowing you to concentrate instead on what turns out to be a pleasing game dynamic. Having to do your stunt sequence being fed instructions in realtime may have initially felt daunting for most players but by the third attempt most had settled in. Thankfully, there's a real addictive quality to the game, too – the urge to improve is imposing and you do get further with each go.

Reflections has already proved its competence when it comes to replay camera positioning in *Driver*, and here they serve to relay your actions in the most dramatic manner possible. It can feel surprisingly satisfying.

Areas of concern? Well, the visuals may look accomplished but the framerate has taken a slight hit and loading times feel agonisingly slow (but may yet be subject to optimisation). Other than that, even with the stunt arena (equipment you earn from the main mode can be placed in here for some extra curricular activity) there is a question over the title's longevity. But time will, quite literally, tell.



The stunt arena (above) is made up of pieces of equipment you earn as you progress through the main mode. Reflections has added gameplay incentives to inject some structure into this area





Metal Gear Solid 2 Substance

Format: **Xbox, PS2, P**
Publisher: **Konar**
Developer: **KCE**
Origin: **Japa**
Release: **November (Xbox), TBC (PS2, P**

Metal Gear nearly reduces grown US journalists to tears for the third year running with help from a prominently positioned teaser-trailer

Once again, *Metal Gear Solid 2* dominated the E3 skyline, with the massed crowds looking upwards to catch a deftly edited glimpse of Solid Snake's further adventures, on Konami's difficult to ignore promo screen. But though the buzz generated by the trailer for *Metal Gear Solid 2 Substance* was in part down to canny marketing, the comically delirious crowds of US journalists attested to the fact that the game is genuinely and enthusiastically anticipated. Their frequent laughter also bore witness to the humour with which Hideo Kojima has expanded the original game. Indeed it's pleasing to note that *Substance* seems to be rather more than just a director's cut of an existing game – opting for extensive new additions rather than sticking with a largely cosmetic update.

The major addition provided by *Substance* is a number of extra missions. A VR mode, similar to that featured in the PSone add-on disk, *Metal Gear Integral*, will introduce over 200 extra missions, some populated with guards of gargantuan proportions, judging by the trailer. There's also five new Solid Snake episodes, called 'Snake Tales' to flesh out the original seven, and the opportunity to play through the Big Shell and Tanker chapters with several new selectable characters, including Cyborg Ninja and – as anyone who objected to playing as Raiden wi note – Solid Snake.

Among the other highlights of the video that had attendees in its thrall were several enticing snippets. Snake apparently bumping into Meryl (from the original PSone *Metal Gea Solid*) during a cut-scene, for example, or the sight of Snake and his mullet bedecked in a tuxedo. Perhaps the most intriguing sight, was that of Solid Snake catching some big ai on a skateboard – which was either an outtake from Konami's *Evolution Skateboarding*, or a rather bizarre minigame.

An Xbox version of *Metal Gear Solid 2* ha been expected since well before the title was released on PlayStation2. *Substance* finally offers owners of Microsoft hardware a chance to experience the title, and although it won't be exclusive to the platform, it does promise to be the definitive version and will be out first on Xbox before appearing on PlayStation2 and PC.

Company E3 line-up

Konami restricted its hottest titles to big-screen teaser-trailers, drawing in the crowds with just a tantalising glimpse of the direction its most popular franchises will soon be taking. So despite the healthy number of playable demo pods at the company's booth, games such as *Evolution Skateboarding* and *Fisherman's Bait* 2003 were bound to disappoint. More heartening were playable GBA versions of some of the company's classic series, for example *Castlevania*, *Contra* and even a handheld version of *Silent Scope*.











It's since been confirmed that the skateboarding sections on show at E3 won't be included in the final product, but there's still plenty of inventiveness

Silent Hill 3

Format: **PlayStation2**
Publisher: **Konami**
Developer: **In-house (Team Silent)**
Origin: **Japan**
Release: **2003**

Konami refuses to break silence regarding its survival horror franchise, but unveils a scary new trailer at E3

Konami wasn't giving too much away, but the integrity of the series so far and the involvement of the same creative minds, bodes well for a title that looks set to continue a particularly psychological blend of survival horror

Although Konami wasn't publicly showing off a playable version of *Silent Hill 3*, a big screen trailer wowed the assembled crowds in Los Angeles, demonstrating the same disembodied sense of urgency and fear that has characterised the last two chapters of the company's psychological survival horror series. The principal noteworthy feature was the apparent introduction of a new protagonist – though if the teaser trailers that were once shown for *Silent Hill 2* are anything to go by, the closely shorn female depicted at E3 could just as easily be another side character.

Other than that, Konami is promising a new set of intriguingly mysterious protagonists, and a wide selection of new items and weapons in order to take on an expanded bestiary of demoniacal nasties. Given the involvement of the same design team responsible for the first two games in the series, it's more than likely going to be another brave bid to combine sophisticated narrative with deeply unsettling visuals and gameplay.

Hopefully, though, *Silent Hill 3* won't feature the same degree of random wandering and poor signposting that was perhaps the only major fault that could reasonably be found with the first two instalments in the series.





Like all Konami's trailers, the *Silent Hill 3* demo was chic and well-edited, and did a good job of conveying the signature motifs of the series

Zone of the Enders: The 2nd Runner

Format: **PlayStation2**
Publisher: **Konami**
Developer: **In-house**
Origin: **Japan**
Release: **2003**

Konami's PlayStation2 sequel marks a return to Mars for Metal Gear Solid veterans, Kojima-san and Shinkawa-san





A greater number and range of enemies is the principal introduction in *The 2nd Runner*, but the game also moves the convoluted plot forwards



These shots' resolution may look suspicious, but then screenshots didn't really do justice to the graceful animation on offer in the first instalment. Likewise, the sequel is gloriously attractive, but it's got to be seen in motion to be appreciated

Also unplayable at E3 was the next instalment of *Zone of the Enders*. However, the involvement of *Metal Gear Solid* veterans, producer Hideo Kojima and character designer Yoji Shinkawa, who return to their Martian mech project, suggests that the sequel should be every bit as accomplished as the original.

Once again, players are involved in an interplanetary conflict on the surface of Mars, though this time the range of combat environments is set to be expanded, taking in canyons, cityscapes, enemy fortresses and even the depths of space.

The promotional trailer for *The 2nd Runner* suggests that certain familiar faces are set to return, offering teasing glimpses of Anubis and Viola (or their Orbital Frames, at least), while once again players are asked to take charge of the Orbital Frame, Jehuty.

Konami also claims that *The 2nd Runner* will feature an extended list of combat moves, a greater number of weapons, a larger sense of interaction with the environment and swarms of enemies, as opposed to the one-on-one encounters that characterised the original. And of course, as was the case with the first title, it's all visually delectable. It just remains to be seen whether it will be as short-lived as the first runner.

Blinx: The Time Sweeper

Format: Xbo
Publisher: Microsoft Game Studios
Developer: Artoon
Origin: Japan
Release: Autumn

Ignore the hideous main character – this may look like another 3D platformer but it houses the best gameplay innovation of recent years





There's a story here about a kidnapped princess and a plan to steal all of the crystals that control time. There's a cat (who appears to be wearing a plastic bag), too, and in its paws you'll find a vacuum cleaner.

Significantly more powerful than Dyson's attempts, this Time Sweeper allows objects within the game world to be sucked up and subsequently fired at enemies (as they come out the way they went in, you can also use these to help you out in the game: blow out a cupboard and then jump on it to access a level that had previously been too high). Conveniently, it also inhales time crystals and this is where the fun begins.

By collecting a number of the same type of crystal in order, you gain momentary control of time – you can pause, record, rewind, fast forward or slow down proceedings (made possible because the Xbox's hard drive keeps a log of your actions). Crystals are colour coded according to the function they enable and hoovering up three in a row gets you one use of the related command (collecting the maximum four gives you two temporal distortions). Pick up another colour before completing the sequence, however, and you get nothing. Start again.

The ingenuity of this element can not be underestimated. It allows an unparalleled amount of freedom, with players adopting a personalised approach to the many puzzling situations they'll face throughout the 40 levels. Having trouble getting past a particularly resilient opponent? You can slow things down, giving you a speed advantage, pause them so that you're the only thing moving in the level, or even record yourself firing off some of the items you've accumulated play the scene again and sneak past while your other self is keeping said obstacle busy. And all without ever experiencing the catastrophic consequences Doc Brown spent all his time warning Marty about.

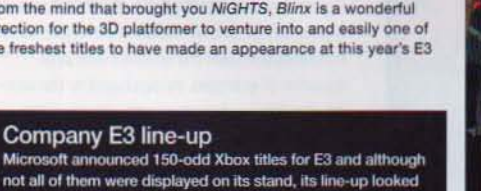
Expect more details on *Blinx* in a future issue.







From the mind that brought you *NiGHTS*, *Blinx* is a wonderful direction for the 3D platformer to venture into and easily one of the freshest titles to have made an appearance at this year's E3



Company E3 line-up

Microsoft announced 150-odd Xbox titles for E3 and although not all of them were displayed on its stand, its line-up looked (even) more varied and substantially stronger than last year's.





Brute Force

Format: **Xbox**
Publisher: **Microsoft Game Studios**
Developer: **Digital Anvil**
Origin: **US**
Release: **October (UK)**

In the US, Microsoft is touting Brute Force as this year's Halo. But if nothing changes, only a literal interpretation of the title will convince consumers to play it



If the screenshots look exciting, don't be fooled. On the evidence shown at E3, *Brute Force* requires plenty of attention if it's going to achieve what Microsoft clearly expects from the game

The idea has been encountered before; incarnate and control any one member of a four-strong squad at any time during a series of mission-based objectives. The Microsoft attendant by the demo pod helpfully explained the plot, but to be honest **Edge** was too transfixed by what was being displayed on the monitor to retain enough of it to disclose here. Rest assured, however, that if it's anything like the character models it's bound to be uninspiring, predictable, clichéd nonsense. And that's just the main quartet of protagonists – the enemies look even less accomplished. In addition, the environment – at least the one forming the backdrop for the demo – appeared entirely populated by brown polygons and it was certainly of poorer quality than most of those found in other Xbox-only projects shown at E3.

Naturally each of the characters at your disposal excels in different areas and exploiting these attributes alongside the limited commands you can issue (follow, engage, etc) does allow for elements of strategy to infiltrate the game dynamic and inject some potential depth. But currently the AI (certainly that of your adversaries) remains mostly unconvincing and the slow pace of the action (more than the framerate which has yet to undergo optimisation) needs improving if this is to keep players interested.





Psychonauts

Format: **Xbox**
Publisher: **Microsoft Game Studios**
Developer: **Double Fine Productions**
Origin: **US**
Release: **Christmas 2003**

Microsoft's handsome platformer projects players into twisted minds armed only with a psychic arsenal to overcome puzzles and obstacles





A thought bubble provides a wonderfully neat and fitting interface, and can be interacted with to activate the lead character, Raz's psychic powers



Microsoft seemed to be showing off some seriously dodgy stuff behind closed doors at E3, so the refreshingly idiosyncratic approach of Tim Schafer was welcome. Although it's ostensibly a conventional platformer, it's rich in creative ideas

Given the track record of Tim Schafer (whose previous creations include the excellent *Grim Fandango*, *Full Throttle* and *Day of the Tentacle*) it comes as no surprise to learn that his latest work boasts a rich background story.

Psychonauts commences with the plucky protagonist, Raz, at a psychic summer camp working towards joining the eponymous band of elite psychic superheroes. When psychic children start disappearing, it predictably falls to Raz to project himself into the minds of successive characters in a bid to get to the bottom of this paranormal plot.

Over the course of 16 levels, players must therefore utilise the character's growing arsenal of psychic powers, with the game's combination of conventional platforming action, combat, and puzzles requiring a thoughtful and dextrous approach. Significantly, the structure of the game promises a steady expansion of powers at Raz's disposal, including teleportation, telekinesis, levitation, fire-starting, prophecy and invisibility, as he continues to work towards his merit badge – which should provide both a graceful learning curve and balanced exploratory structure.

The whole package is wrapped up in a hand-crafted aesthetic and negotiated via an interactive thought-bubble interface. *Psychonauts* is an enticing prospect.

Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance

Format: **PS2, Xbox, GC, GBA**
Publisher: **Midway**
Developer: **In-house**
Origin: **US**
Release: **Autumn (US), TBC (UK)**

Redesigned. Reinvented. Revisited. The latest Mortal Kombat sequel successfully buries some of the franchise's darker past













You could see it on their faces. The cynical smile as the joypad was picked up with a presumptuous upperbody motion and the turnabout once the loading had finished. *Mortal Kombat: Dark Alliance* succeeded in making some new friends in Los Angeles.

The show demo only featured eight of the promised 20-odd fighters and a limited selection of arenas (the latter, while not of the standard of those in, say, *Dead or Alive 3* nevertheless impressed, even if little interaction with them appeared to be afforded to the player). True to the early examples of the series, the feel of the combat is more immediate – and thus also lighter – than the current crop of technically-centred beat 'em ups.

This is also evident in the ease with which you can switch fighting styles (of which there are three per character) mid-bout – a single press of a DualShock2 shoulder button will suffice. If this sounds critical, it is not meant to – in practice it works beautifully, allowing you to significantly alter your strategy in a fraction of a second, and is easily the game's most intriguing characteristic.

There's certainly a gap in the current market for an accessible and vibrant 3D beat 'em up. Should Midway continue on its present course, *Mortal Kombat: Dark Alliance* could form part of the few who'll fit right in.



Many approached it with preconceptions but *Deadly Alliance* could mark a return to form for the *Kombat* series. Not many moves were implemented at E3 (fatalities were absent, for instance) but there is potential





Company E3 line-up

There was a distinct feel of franchise reviving on Midway's stand, with updates of *Mortal Kombat*, *Defender*, even *SpyHunter* (on the GBA) available for play. Of some interest was *Haven: Call of the King*, the current project keeping Traveller's Tales busy and described as 'multi-genre'. The code at the show extended beyond little more than a technical demo, however. Of the rest, *Doomsday Rescue*, loosely described as a futuristic *Wreckless* (hopefully without the flaws experienced in Activision's graphically superb title) showed some promise.

Dead to Rights

Format: **Xbox**
Publisher: **Namco**
Developer: **In-house**
Origin: **US**
Release: **Q3 (US), TBC (UK)**

Previously in **E**101

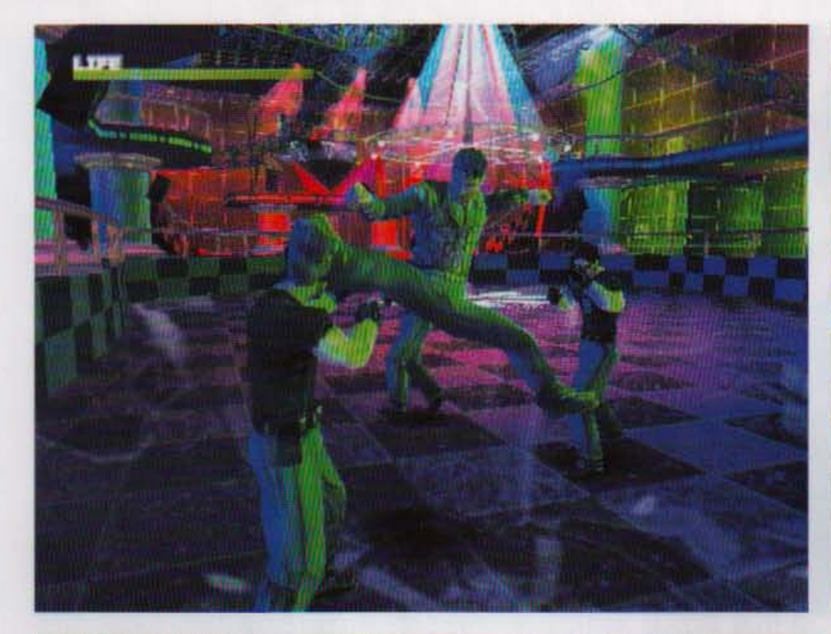
Jack Slate's a good cop in a bad city, and he's looking for revenge. According to Namco anyway

Dead to Rights was originally unveiled at last year's E3 as a PlayStation2 title. Now, after two years in development, it's set to 'premiere' on the Xbox – though what that means with regard to a potential PS2 version is currently unclear. What is clear is that Namco owes a debt of inspiration to *Max Payne*, particularly when it comes to the tortuously convoluted, hardboiled revenge drama that provides the backstory to *Dead to Rights*. However, judging by the demo that was playable at the company's stand at E3, it has produced a game that has the scope to make up for the slightly disappointing nature of Take 2's Bullet Time opus.

There's certainly a much greater degree of player freedom than that which characterised *Max Payne*. Although it necessitates a complicated input system, Namco has pulled out all the stops to allow the realtime re-enactment of a staggering range of action-film manoeuvres. In order to guide players gently through the intricacies of the control scheme the game kicks off with what is essentially a tutorial. Thus players are introduced gradually to the joys of a variety of context-sensitive disarm techniques, neck-snapping grappling moves and all sorts of slo-mo balletic gunplay. You'll even be able to use opponents as body shields – dispatching them remorselessly when you tire of their cover.

As with *Max Payne*, an adrenaline meter governs the amount of Bullet Time you have at your disposal – and also how helpful your faithful canine friend, Shadow, can be. When your meter is full, he'll attack enemies or retrieve items, and at certain moments during the game, it becomes necessary to take control of him to access difficult-to-reach locations. A host of other minigames is also expected to feature, including a lock-picking sequence. And visually, while it's not exactly earth shattering, it's not too shoddy either, with several gritty depictions of noirish locations.

All things considered, *Dead to Rights* may yet provide the gaming experience that *Max Payne* promised but failed to deliver. It will be interesting to see, however, whether *Dead to Rights* falls into the same trap of staccato set-piece pacing, or whether the greater range of physical feats and more controlled firearm combat will be sufficient to compensate.





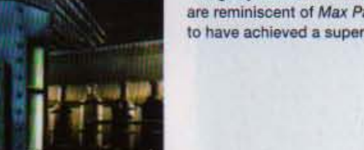




Dead to Rights **boasts many minigames, including some that require you to play the part of Shadow, who is usually simply an adrenaline-enabled sidekick**

Company E3 line-up

Disappointingly, Namco opted not to demonstrate *Soul Calibur 2* on its stand at E3, despite the fervid anticipation that the title is justifiably generating at the moment. In fact *Dead to Rights* was the most exciting title at the company's booth, with the only other highlight provided by rolling video footage of *Xenosaga*. Aside from these two titles, there were various *Pac-Man* spin-offs and modern day collections of Namco's impressive back catalogue, but little that was of interest.



The gritty noir environments and slo-mo combat are reminiscent of *Max Payne*, but Namco appears to have achieved a superior range of film action

Legend of Zelda

Format: GameCube
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: In-house
Origin: Japan
Release: December (Japan), February 2003 (UK)

Displaying one of the most stunning graphical treatments **Edge** has had the pleasure to encounter, Link returns to the forefront of Nintendo's line-up











The E3 demo was split up into five elements to give a general idea of what lies ahead. The dungeon area shown initially at Nintendo's press conference offered the usual components (light torches to reveal item chests) but also introduced some of the new aspects for the series (pick up weapons dropped by foes; break open wooden doors by using larger sword but swinging ability is compromised).

The boss level showcased a huge lava creature breathing streams of fire, cel-shaded magma dripping from its body, its claws clamping down on you. Of the areas on show this one perhaps best highlighted the few camera niggles **Edge** experienced while playing but again the option to z-lock tended to sort out the problem (if required, the c-stick freely controls the camera).

Other elements included stealth options (carry a barrel and hide in it to avoid spotlights and guards on island fortress) and humorous combat training in a seaside hamlet.

In conversation, Miyamoto-san revealed that the gameworld is divided into islands (which presumably you travel to in Link's sailboat) and while smaller in size than *Ocarina of Time*, the volume of gameplay crammed into that area has increased significantly.

Like Mario, there was something instantly familiar about *Legend of Zelda*. It may look a generation away from *OoT* but not in terms of play mechanic – the N64 masterpiece is a tough act to follow and from that perspective things don't obviously appear to have progressed as far. In that sense, and on current form, the new Zelda looks set to match rather than surpass the level set by *OoT*. But that's hardly a disaster.

Company E3 line-up

Nintendo, along with Sega, had one of the most consistent stands at the show and one of its strongest to date. Of the titles forming part of its 'Game Giants' lineage (see Frontend) none presented significant reasons for concern. *Mario Party 4* got a lot of attention due to competitions run throughout the day and the company was really pushing *Animal Crossing* which, as cynical minds pointed out, made perfect commercial sense (the game uses every new Nintendo peripheral available). There was also a healthy GBA showing with *Metroid Fusion, The Legend of Zelda, Custom Robo GX, Kururin Paradise, Yoshi's Island, Game & Watch Gallery 4, Disney's Magical Quest*, to name the main players.



While the shots don't show Link's new extended spin attack, you can see just how well expressions are conveyed. It's just like controlling a cartoon



Super Mario Sunshine

Format: **GameCube**
Publisher: **Nintendo**
Developer: **In-house**
Origin: **Japan**
Release: **June (Japan), August (US), TBC (UK)**

You've spent the last 17 years saving a princess. You finally jet off to the tranquillity of a tropical island. And before long you're moustache deep in your usual antics







The island in question has become consumed with sludge and a campaign to dirty your name has clearly been launched. Time to strap the nearest hydro-weapon to your back and set off to clean matters up.

Or you would if you were Mario. The world's most famous plumber returns after a six-year absence and introduces a central gameplay element as significant as *SMW*'s Yoshi (who, alongside Toad and Princess Peach, makes an appearance) in the form of Mario's water cannon. At the press of a button, you switch from a powerful directional waterjet (to knock down enemies and wash sludge away) to a jetpack function, and Miyamoto-san revealed that other nozzles could be found, increasing Mario's abilities.



The six-level E3 demo offered plenty of chances to try out the new moves (slackrope walking, bounce up the side of walls, super spin jump) and everything felt reassuringly familiar. While highlighting a few stubborn camera moments, these stages also revealed how much navigational freedom there is and how admirably the layout accommodates Mario's gymnastics so that many areas can be reached via a variety of routes/methods.

While the screenshots fail to do the quality of the graphics and the stunning effects justice, spare a thought for the audio – **Edge** can happily report that the Pro-Logic II track matches the excellence of the visuals.

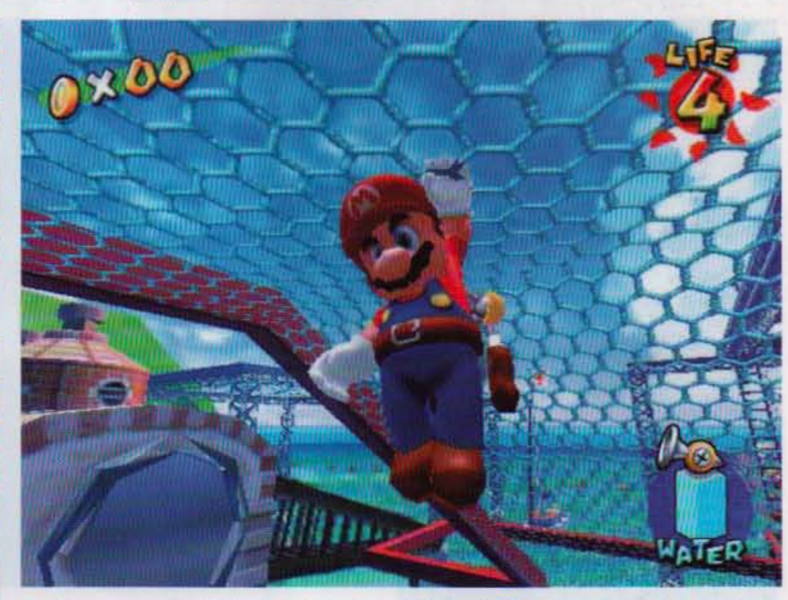
Technical enhancements aside, neither Mario nor Zelda appeared to offer the kind of generational leap we've come to expect, but that's not to say you shouldn't expect some surprises in the finished code.











An enhanced version of *SM64*, perhaps, but not without the unmistakable Mario charm, and some of the effects are superb. The camera can occasionally do its own thing but moving the c-stick takes care of that

Metroid Prime

Format: **GameCube**
Publisher: **Nintendo**
Developer: **Retro Studios**
Origin: **US**
Release: **November 18 (US), TBC (UK)**

The game's first showing at the Nintendo press conference may have had a few people worried, but things are (finally) looking positive for one of NCL's main franchises









Elements from the *Metroid* universe show up but some of the series' essence has been lost. Firing off a powered-up shot and seeing Samus' face reflected on the inside of the visor is one of many great touches

Without a doubt, *Metroid Prime* was one of E3's most pleasant surprises. Main character, Samus Aran's leap of faith from classic 2D adventure to 3D first/thirdperson shooter had many of her fans gasping in both fear and disbelief. With Gumpei Yokoi, producer of the original series, sadly killed in a 1997 car accident, the decision to pass the baton to Retro Studios seemed almost foolhardy on Nintendo's behalf. However, the visual and visceral power of *Prime* left E3 pundits gasping for more.

Nintendo's confidence in the new *Metroid* could perhaps be judged from the number of pods dedicated to showing off Retro's efforts, rivalling both *Mario Sunshine* and *Zelda* for sheer floor space (albeit in a less prominent position). The game's punchy lighting effects and detailed environments wrap around Samus and her alien foe to create a remarkably solid gameworld. *Metroid Prime*'s most controversial element, the switch to a largely firstperson viewpoint, now seems fitting with the series' dedication to immersive and atmospheric gameplay.

This being a Nintendo title, however, the firstperson blasting and navigation is augmented by a lock-on system for targeting enemies – although sharpshooters will be pleased to hear that this feature can be overridden for more freeform combat. And where player orientation and gameplay needs require it, most specifically when Samus collapses into a sphere for *Super Monkey Ball*-esque rolling manoeuvres (a much-used design feature of the game's SNES incarnation), the camera view shifts smoothly to the thirdperson. Staring out of Samus' eyes again and the camera moves with a weightiness reminiscent of the *Turok* titles.

While gazing through Samus' visor, the player is able to switch between modes. Most significantly on display at E3 was the ability to scan rooms for items – including enemy gun emplacement controls, and locks for rooms. Another method for unsealing chambers has Samus shrinking into her spherical form and rolling into suitable recepticals, which triggers actions such as doors to spiral open.

The playable area of *Metroid* at E3 included a battle with a large alien, the defeat of which leads to a pulsing, time-limited escape through a series of tunnels. Just as with *Halo*, *Metroid* seems able to convey a palpable sense of pressure and intensity. But while both are sci-fi bound shooters, it's perhaps just a little too early for that kind of comparison to be fairly made.

Eternal Darkness: Sanity's Requiem

Format: **GameCube**
Publisher: **Nintendo**
Developer: **Silicon Knights**
Origin: **Canada**
Release: **June 24 (US), TBC (UK)**

Previously in **E**86, **E**99, **E**104

Originally for the N64, Silicon Knights' psychological thriller was becoming something of a regular E3 attendee but this year is its last. The game is finally ready to ship



Edge's only worry at this stage is whether this 'psychological thriller', as Nintendo terms it, is indeed pushing the boundaries of terror as far as it needs to. This is, after all, the game's main selling point. Finding out it's a sanitised, light horror title instead would be rather disappointing

One of the 'mature' titles in Nintendo's GameCube line-up, *Eternal Darkness* has undoubtedly benefited from an extended period of development and a change of hardware. Whereas it initially looked like a straightforward *Biohazard* clone, the game has evolved into something that promises much more than simple imitation.

The storyline spans 20 centuries and as one of 12 characters (five were playable at E3) you have to survive your way through the history by solving obligatory puzzles (albeit more interesting than the usual offerings), conjuring spells and disposing of the supernatural entities roaming around the locales.

Edge will freely admit to not having enough time at the show to properly experience the game's much vaunted Sanity System which is expected to add an element of unpredictability to the action and keep players second guessing their decisions. The testscreen next month will be an opportunity for a proper assessment of this intriguing feature but for now **Edge** can highlight the ease of use of the targeting system, the animation (which allows characters to express emotion according to particular situations) and the overall atmosphere evoked by *Eternal Darkness: Sanity's Requiem* as three elements currently seemingly in place.





The character list is diverse and each carries a selection of weapons that is historically correct

Star Fox Adventures

Format: **GameCube**
Publisher: **Nintendo**
Developer: **Rare**
Origin: **UK**
Release: **November**

Previously in **E**99

The upside saw a new playable character and a reprise of the old Star Fox action, but there was also cause for concern







Some wonderful environmental detail, but some of the gameplay elements experienced at the show didn't appear to indicate a significant move forward from Rare's days of *Banjo Kazooie* et al

Rare will be hoping that it's third time lucky for this game, which was first shown at E3 in 2000 as the N64 title *Dinosaur Planet*. On first sight, that history's just a bad memory now, with the game highlighting GameCube's capabilities to generate realistic lighting, shadows and bump-mapping effects.

Two missions were playable. One meshed the new character of Krystal with that most traditional of *Star Fox* mechanic, the flying boss. It also revealed a slice of the plot: how the evil General Scales subdued the Dinosaur Planet and hence the overall quest of the game. The other mission followed Fox as he attempted to rescue Princess Tricky, a small dinosaur, from the clutches of Scales' henchmen. This involved a touch of combat and stretch of what appeared to be downhill extreme tobogganing.

Graphically, everything was fluid and appealing, for what is obviously shaping up to be a kid-oriented game. More worrying however, was the gameplay mechanic which had both Fox and Krystal wandering around levels carrying explosive barrels to throw at suitable locations to progress. Target audience aside, **Edge** hopes this painfully crude dynamic, the barrels continue to respawn until the appropriate wall or door is breached, isn't representative of the level of cognitive challenge offered throughout the game.

Andy McNab: Team SAS

Format: **Xbox**
Publisher: **Rage**
Developer: **In-house**
Origin: **UK**
Release: **Autumn 2003**

Fears that an Andy McNab endorsed product would just turn into another Counter-Strike wannabe have been crushed. Rage's new FPS has style and punch in abundance









Short cut-scenes will intersperse the action to add a narrative thread and, hopefully, increase the tension

Danger zone

To enhance the arcade feel of the game, a bonus multiplier has been included. Ending the lives of several adversaries with high accuracy will trigger an 'in the zone' state. When this boost is enabled the player receives a massive score multiplier and damage taken is halved, while firing rate increases. Scores have a direct influence on the gameplay and once a mission is completed the character's stats, such as shot accuracy, can be increased.







Working with your four team mates will increase your chances of surviving the mission intact, although fallen comrades will be resurrected for the next sortie. The emphasis is firmly on all-action arcade thrills

Yes, the man himself was brought on board to provide vital know-how that should ensure a level of authenticity. Not that Rage's effort into FPS territory is supposed to be realistic – far from it. The comic-book stylisation and arcade overtones are a breath of fresh air in a genre which has become increasingly po-faced and predictable in recent years.

However, underneath the vibrant aesthetic is an attention to detail that bodes very well. Down to individual hand-signals and movement patterns, everything has been modelled precisely and meticulously on known SAS practice. Input also extends to terminology – 'head-shots' are now considered passé, in *Andy McNab: Team SAS* you'll be able to perform a 'liquid death' – shooting an enemy under the nose, thus penetrating the brainstem and turning the body to jelly.

In other ways, too, this is not your traditional FPS. There's no wandering aimlessly though kilometres of virtual landscape. It's all about intense bouts of action framed by short cut-scenes to raise the tension. It's possible that things may feel a little controlled and restrictive, but Rage is convinced that a little scripting will go a long way. "We are designing the game around the player," says group development manager, **Simon Gardner**. "We will force the player to be aware of his team mates. It's all about feeling part of the team. Is it possible to finish the mission alone? Yes. But it is much more rewarding to get to the end with everyone alive."

There are four members of your SAS team, given an assignment to investigate bandit activity in Surinam. But the bandits are the least of their problems when the Russians turn up to try and re-establish a missile silo left dormant since the Cuban missile crisis.

Each character is a specialist in a particular area: John Riley is the leader and uses a shotgun to lay down large amounts of fire; Victoria Taylor is the scout and bomb disposal expert; Jose Sanchez the ranger and sniper, while Mark Carlton is the beefcake with the mini-gun.

Even though playable code isn't available, the move towards a *Time Crisis*-style of gameplay is clear to see. Also, the ability to play through the game from each of the character's perspectives should offer a good deal of variety. In terms of tone, style and production values the game could well be a force to be reckoned with.

Panzer Dragoon Orta

Format: **Xbox**
Publisher: **Sega**
Developer: **Smilebit**
Origin: **Japan**
Release: **October 2 (UK)**

It's still not got Panzers or Dragoons in it, but Smilebit's next-generation update of Sega's classic shoot 'em up is nevertheless hugely satisfying

Now that *Rez* and its heady dose of synaesthesia has rehabilitated the on-rails shoot 'em up, Smilebit's decision to go back to the roots of the *Panzer Dragoon* series is fairly unsurprising. Even in light of the hefty eBay prices that are routinely charged for *Panzer Dragoon Saga*, the developer has chosen to eschew the RPG genre in favour of a uncomplicated shoot 'em up that, in terms of game mechanics, borrows almost entirely from *Panzer Dragoon* and *Panzer Dragoon Zwei*. And while it's a decision that wasn't universally applauded at E3, giving rise to some complaints that the game is too linear, it was difficult to take such criticisms seriously after playing through the two-level demo that was playable at the show.

The most noteworthy aspect of *Panzer Dragoon Orta* is that, although it's unsophisticated, it's also enormously exhilarating to play. The finished game will feature ten branching stages through which players guide their dragon mount in a bid to save humanity (again). As with earlier titles in the series, players are equipped with two modes of fire (free-fire and a target-lock mode) and a berserk attack that destroys everything onscreen, while trigger buttons rotate the camera view around a full 360-degree view in four stages – a technique that has to be mastered to overcome the swarms of enemies that attack from all sides.

There are two major new additions to the control scheme of *Panzer Dragoon Zwei*. First, it's possible to speed up and slow down; and second, players can morph between different dragon forms. Thus one form offers speed at the expense of offensive firepower, while the other offers a more powerful arsenal at the expense of velocity.

Really though, the only major differences between *Panzer Dragoon Orta* and its predecessors is that it's on a non-Sega hardware platform (it's exclusive to Xbox, as Microsoft was keen to point out at its pre-E3 press conference), and blessed with spectacular audio-visual effects. It's a fairly straightforward aesthetic, but it's no less lustrous because of it, with scintillating pyrotechnics backed up by a soundtrack that was accentuated thanks to Sega's use of Dolby Digital headphones. It might not have the highbrow aspirations of *Rez*, but it delivers a similar level of exhilaration.









As these screenshots show, *Panzer Dragoon Orta* is rather better looking than its Saturn precursors but it sticks to the original formula with pleasing results



Company E3 line-up

E3 offered Sega another stage from which to vindicate its multiplatform strategy. Some of the strongest titles on every platform were developed by one of the company's independent development houses, from *GunGrave* and *Shinobi* on PlayStation2 to *Super Monkey Ball 2* on GameCube and *Panzer Dragoon Orta* on Xbox. And as Sega of America's President and COO, Peter Moore, was keen to highlight, the company also has a deserved reputation for producing enjoyable – and profitable – sports titles.

GunGrave

Format: PlayStation2
Publisher: Sega
Developer: Smilebit/Red Entertainment
Origin: Japan
Release: July (Japan), TBC (UK)

Previously in E110

Prettier than most, Sega's frenetic shooter used its addictive powers to ensure a considerable following at the show





The great special move (above) involves the coffin your character has hanging from his (strong) neck

One of the more attractive prospects on Sony's stand, if only because it looked so different to most of the other titles it shared floorspace with, Red Entertainment's exquisite manga-styled, so very frantic shooter was looking a little more evolved than when **Edge** last saw it.

The balletic flow of the action and the remarkable uniqueness of the graphics were expected to remain unaltered, of course, but the camera (one of **Edge**'s previous concerns regarding *GunGrave*) appeared better behaved – although that might have something to do with a better appreciation of the main character's motion within the gaming environment second time around.

One element that did escape **Edge** when it played the game last is that while your trajectory through the level may ultimately be linear, that doesn't forgo the possibility of sidediving (John Woo-style, naturally) off course and finding the odd extra location to pepper with bullets.

And while it's a joy to watch and play (possibly even in that order) the issue regarding longevity remains – after all, there's only so much mindless shooting a (wo)man can take. In its favour *GunGrave* attempts to prolong your interest by scoring your performance on accuracy, time taken, style and number of kills. And on current form you can easily imagine it might. Momentarily, at least.



The camera still needs tweaking. In addition to firing your twin semi-automatic handguns, a 'Desperado'-style rocket launch attack is available, and like the special move (see other caption) it also involves the coffin you carry

ToeJam & Earl III: All Funked Up

Format: Xbox
Publisher: Sega
Developer: Visual Concepts/TJ&E
Origin: US
Release: October

Two of the Mega Drive's favourite characters re-emerge after a ten-year absence. And they've brought a randomly generated world with them

One of the prettier games at E3, the charming qualities of ToeJam and Big Earl were again evident as the two funky aliens team up for a third outing. Aided by newcomer Latisha, they must retrieve the 12 sacred Albums of Funk which uncool earthlings have borrowed without permission.

To help the trio in their musical mission, Santa Funk provides a multitude of power-ups in keeping with the series' enchanting off-the-wall nature. Should their (impressive) diversity somehow fail to keep your interest, then perhaps the numerous minigames and sidequests will. Furthermore, the random generation of the gameworld ensures the uniqueness of every game and you can always invite a witness to play along – the dynamic multiplayer option (as seen in *Project Eden*) automatically splits the display should a second joypad become activated.

At the show all of the main elements appeared in place, the resulting gaming environment an unmistakable reflection of ToeJam and Big Earl's previous memorable adventures. Ludicrous power-ups, 40 original funky tracks and bags of character – prolonged play shall reveal whether time has been kind to Funkotron's most famous emigrants. But if nothing else, *ToeJam & Earl III* was yet another distinct addition to Sega's already diverse E3 line-up.



It'll be interesting to see if current gaming audiences display the same levels of enthusiasm for the *TJ&E* experience as those of the mid-'90s. It remains something of an acquired taste, after all





Ratchet & Clank

Format: **PlayStation2**
Publisher: **SCEE**
Developer: **Insomniac Games**
Origin: **US**
Release: **October (UK)**

One of the most visually impressive titles seen on PS2 to date but does Ratchet & Clank bring anything new to the familiar action adventure stable?

Company E3 line-up

With the likes of *Ico* and *Frequency* now released Sony had something of a muted show compared to last year. There just didn't seem to be the same sense of innovation around. Other than the games selected for inclusion in this report, *Sly Cooper and the Thievius Raccoonus*, a new cel-shaded platformer with a very silly title, probably deserves mentioning. But, as in previous years, an injection of thirdparty content bolstered the SCE stand line-up.





Insomniac's relationship with SCE's other favourite platformer creator, Naughty Dog, results in the two sharing technology, therefore explaining how the former was able to borrow the *Jak and Daxter* engine. And it shows – watch the action for a couple of minutes and if you were told that this was in fact a sequel to Naughty Dog's PS2 effort you'd believe it.

More crucial than the weapons (of which there are 35) is the RPG, adventure games and shooter influences that Insomniac (with design consultancy from Mark Cerny of Cerny Games who's been involved with *Crash Bandicoot*, *Spyro* and *Jak and Daxter*) feels is responsible for balancing *Ratchet & Clank*.

Not only are you not able to collect/buy every item in the game (thus forcing tough decisions and enhancing the replay quotient), you're also not allowed to complete the game in one go – in traditional adventure style, items you encounter later on deliver access to hitherto unexplored areas of previous levels.



The helicopter attachment, one of the many gadgets available. Impressively, everything in these screens is made up of proper geometry

In total 18 worlds await and in addition to their imposing size, the environments are also some of the most graphically accomplished the PS2 has played host to so far, with a distinct sci-fi theme running throughout. The sense of scale is excellent.

The demo **Edge** witnessed included plenty of humour and interesting items. One level introduces special footwear to grind the railings that make up its environment while elsewhere magnetic boots ensure you can walk on pipes at any angle (the display is character-centric so the scenery, not Ratchet, ends up upside down). A helicopter upgrade boosts mobility, enemy gun turrets can be taken over to shoot down spaceships and vehicles also make an appearance.

Certainly, there are similarities with *Jak and Daxter*. The major difference, though, is that on current form *Ratchet & Clank* should easily emerge as the superior game. There's a layer of involvement that is missing from Naughty Dog's (admittedly still highly entertaining) seamless platformer.





Shooting. One element that was missing in *Jak and Daxter*. It doesn't transform a game per se, but in *Ratchet & Clank* it certainly lends additional support to what is already a very accomplished platforming adventure





Primal

Format: **PlayStation2**
Publisher: **SCEE**
Developer: **In-house (Team Cambridge)**
Origin: **UK**
Release: **Autumn**

Team Cambridge's dark fantastical vision for Primal looks great but deeper questions remain unanswered

While you are locked on to an enemy everyone else tends to stay away so the combat system isn't as frustrating as it could have been. Certain sections of the E3 demo felt a little repetitive and clichéd but there's time yet

Another high-production-value game from one of Sony's internal studios, *Primal* was one of the best-looking PS2 games at E3. Use of a dynamic loading system has boosted the polygon counts of single rooms to more than those in entire levels of the team's PSone game, *MediEvil*. Effects such as realtime lighting, motion blur, depth of field and smoke and water are also evident. But visuals apart, the plot – half-demon, half-human Jennifer Tate fights through four elemental demon kingdoms to restore the balance between chaos and order – is less innovative.

One of the levels on display was Solum, a land of eternal winter. The other demon realms, as one would expect, are water, air and fire-based. As befits her dual origins, Jen can transform into the demonic form of the realm she's in. In the case of Solum, Jen morphs into the Ferai, a fierce, horned race with giant claws, which is lucky as combat plays an important part in *Primal*. This involves a lock-on mechanic as well as beat 'em up-style combos and pressure-sensitive attacks using the DualShock's analogue buttons.

Primal's features two playable characters, allowing players to switch between Jen, for combat and exploration, and the gargoyle Scree, for puzzle solving. Compared to combat, the latter proved to be clunky in places, and ensuring the balance between the two elements will prove critical to the game's success.





Some of the puzzles force you to swap between the two characters and occasionally require a little lateral thinking. Another promising SCEE title

The Getaway

Format: **PlayStation2**
Publisher: **SCEE**
Developer: **In-house (Team Soho)**
Origin: **UK**
Release: **November**

Previously in **E**89

"The future of electronic entertainment," according to SCEE. Well, 46Km^2 of polygonised London or not, this isn't exactly what **Edge** had in mind





The driving sections suffer from handling problems, with players forced constantly to correct the trajectory of the vehicle selected



Currently, the game doesn't play as well as it looks but there's time for the team to file down most (if not all) of *The Getaway*'s rougher edges

No one's disputing *The Getaway*'s visual quality – it is as close as navigating through the real London as anyone has bothered to get. There is a framerate cost to pay but nothing that'll set alarm bells ringing. Control, on the other hand, is a different matter. The driving sections, regardless of which car you pick up (all 60 feel unique, of course) require constant directional correction and clipping other vehicles often results in an exaggerated – and frustrating – loss of control. A friendlier, possibly less realistic, approach is needed.

Similarly, the pedestrian action looks (and mostly feels) clumsy, even when demoed by members of the team (who also couldn't get past the E3 level without getting shot by enemies – always a worrying sign).

While the main game is understandably locked in on authenticity (eg guns discarded once out of ammo – no reloads) the team did divulge there would be bonus modes available to those who finish the adventure.

There is clearly potential here and many elements are already in place. And no, it isn't another *GTAIII* – that's a lazy comparison. *The Getaway* is a deliberately more linear affair, with enough individual touches to stand its own ground. Besides, surely the most crucial aspect currently is that it clearly needs more work. An 18 certificate and gratuitous swearing simply aren't enough.

SOCOM: US Navy SEALs

Format: **PlayStation2**
Publisher: **SCEE**
Developer: **Zipper Interactive**
Origin: **US**
Release: **August (US), TBC (UK)**

Shown last year as the title expected to kick-start Sony's PS2 online plans, SOCOM returns this year as the title expected to kick-start Sony's PS2 online plans





You can play *SOCOM* on your own. You can instruct your AI team via the USB headset and they respond with the appropriate action as well as the occasional progress report as you negotiate the 12 operations in Alaska, the Congo, Thailand and Turkmenistan.

But you can also play with up to 15 other players. Online. Admittedly, **Edge** has yet to sample this but SCEE did set up a sixplayer (two teams of three) affair after its E3 conference that proved popular. Had **Edge** been supported by anyone other than two shamefully inadequate German journos, perhaps the terrorist team would have had a chance to also experience defeat. Even so, there was much to enjoy in Zipper Interactive's effort. Things may look a little blocky when placed alongside the latest *Tom Clancy* title, for instance, and movement felt a little clunky in places (the default control system may have had an influence) but the sense of atmosphere was superb.

The team is also keen to stress the level of realism. In addition to rating each of the 60-odd weapons for power, range, accuracy and amount of recoil generated, their weight is calculated and affects your character accordingly. This attention to detail extends to other elements of the game so don't expect to last long if you tend to do most of your fighting without making too many tactical or strategic decisions – but then that's part of *SOCOM*'s attraction.



Play can occasionally feel a little messy at this stage but there are plenty of other positive elements to balance things out. The game has the potential to create an engrossing experience

Hardware

Format: **PlayStation2 (online only)**
Publisher: **SCEE**
Developer: **In-house**
Origin: **UK**
Release: **Q4**

From the ashes of Dropship rises Sony Europe's first online PlayStation2 game – and it rocks

The initial prognosis for *Hardware* wasn't good. Using the renderer and physics engine from *Dropship*, the game has only been in development since February. It's also a vehicle-based combat game: a genre which rarely sets the world alight, witness *Twisted Metal*, *Red Dog*, *Cel Damage* et al. But amazingly the game, which will be a launch title as PS2 goes online in Europe was one of the most enjoyable of the show.

Designed for 32 players per level, although this may be scaled down to 16, the E3 demo had eight linked players fighting in a compact level, which appeared to be lifted almost wholesale from a *Dropship* base. The vehicles are different however. Four were playable: a jeep, an armoured personnel carrier and two tanks. Combat is simple. Left stick rotates, X accelerates, square brakes and R1 fires. Key to winning is working out the locations of the powerups and health packs. As is standard with online shooters, the default weaponry isn't powerful enough to start a killing spree. Powerups included the usual array of homing missiles, lasers and salvo rockets, with plenty more promised in the finished version.

Sony expects to prolong the game's lifespan by releasing new downloadable levels, vehicles, weapons and skins when *Hardware* goes live. A full community service of competitions and leagues should also ensure this simple but addictive game drives online PS2 usage.



Simple but an awful lot of fun. Of all the games on offer at E3, *Hardware* was one of the titles **Edge** spent the most amount of time playing, despite losing consistently to the development team





Red Faction 2

Format: **PlayStation2**
Publisher: **THQ**
Developer: **Volition**
Origin: **US**
Release: **Q4 (US, UK)**

Volition aims to make up for a disappointing first outing for its Geo-Mod engine with a squad-based sequel

Despite achieving considerable success at retail, the original *Red Faction* didn't meet with unanimous critical approbation. Expectations raised by early, though (in hindsight, suspiciously) well-presented, demos of a revolutionary new game engine were eventually dashed by poor level design and rudimentary AI, but **Edge** is hoping that a forthcoming sequel will lay to rest such disappointing memories. *Red Faction 2* is set five years after the Martian rebellion of the first game, with the action moving to a typically dystopian Earth. And while this means that the freeform terrain destruction of the early parts of *Red Faction* is reined in, it should also leave the developer free to focus on tighter game design.

Once again, players are able to commandeer a variety of vehicles, and wreak havoc with an arsenal of 15 weapons. Boss battles are also set to return, while THQ promises that improved AI and a more gradual difficulty curve will be introduced in response to criticisms of the original *Red Faction*. Unlike the original, the action in the sequel is squad-based, with players assisted by five AI-controlled squad members, each of whom possesses unique abilities. During the E3 demo, one squad member was capable of hacking into electronic security systems, for example. And although friendly fire wasn't implemented in the demo, the developer hasn't come to a decision whether it will make it into the finished game.

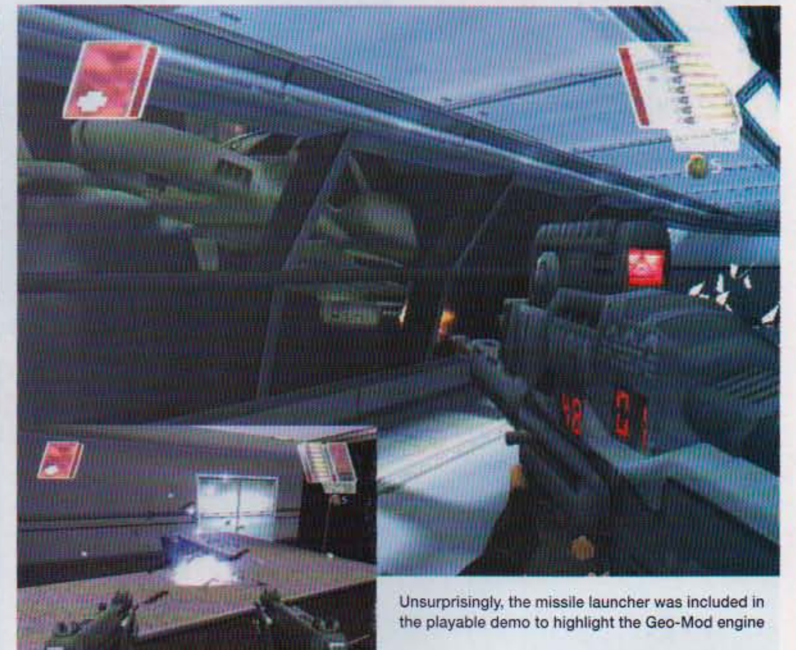
A fourplayer splitscreen multiplayer mode rounds things off, and though the game is exclusive to PlayStation2, it is also compatible with a USB keyboard and mouse. Unfortunately, this may not necessarily be a good thing; the original *Red Faction* seemed to have been constructed around a mouse/keyboard input system, and the level design clearly suffered when shoehorned into the constraints imposed by the PlayStation2 controller. Indeed, given the promotion of its predecessor, **Edge** is wary of getting too excited about *Red Faction 2*. Nevertheless, after a reasonably impressive demonstration at E3, we are cautiously optimistic. In any case, it's bound to sell well.







THQ is confident that this sequel does away with many of the flaws that bedevilled the first Geo-Mod title, and playable demos certainly seemed to indicate that many of the problems have been corrected





Unsurprisingly, the missile launcher was included in the playable demo to highlight the Geo-Mod engine

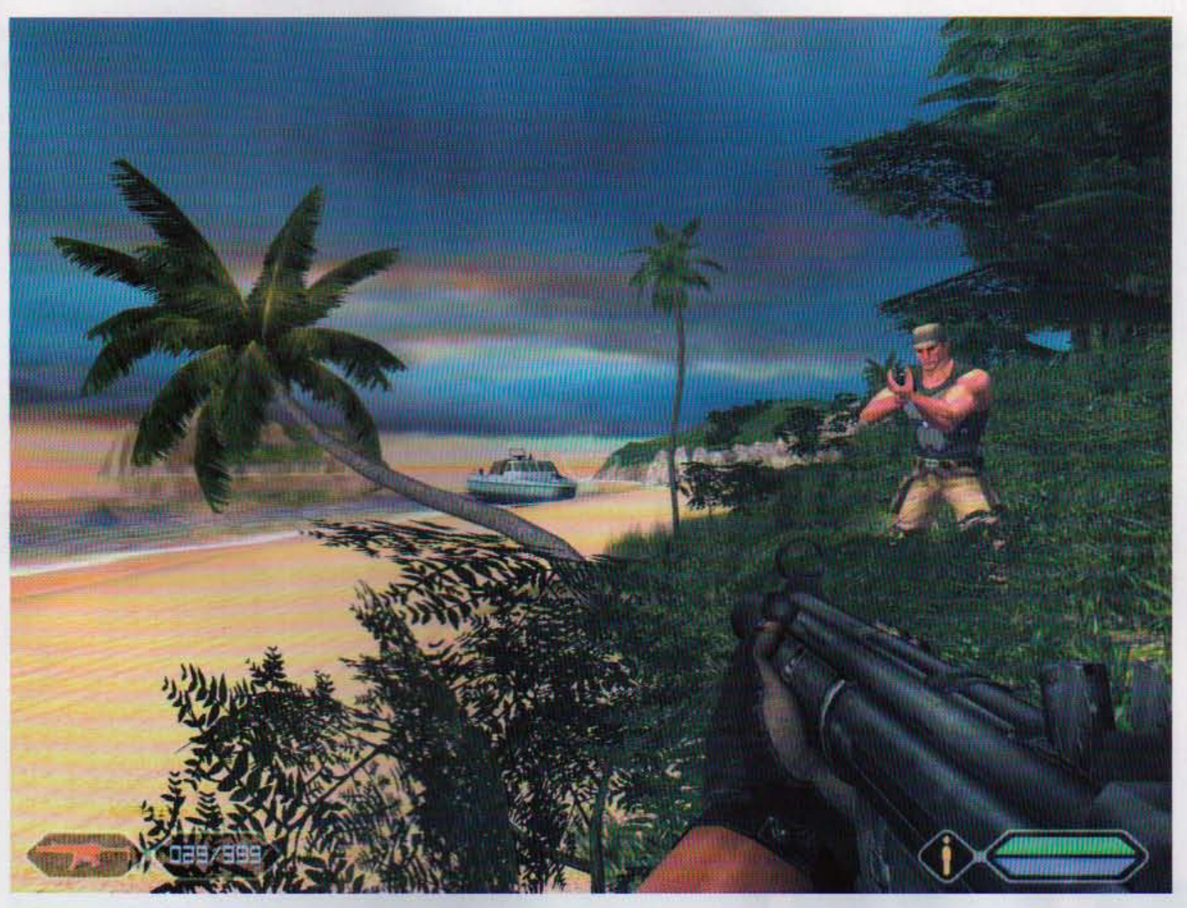
Company E3 line-up

THQ's stand was of a generally impressive standard, with titles such as *Alter Echo* and *Tak and The Power of Ju Ju* carving out what the company no doubt hopes will prove to be lucrative new franchises, while sequels such as *Summoner 2* and *Evil Dead 2* showed more promise than their predecessors. Even aside from the massive queues for photo opportunities with celebrities like Carmen Electra, the company's stand was rightfully popular with attendees.

Far Cry

Format: **PC, Xbox, GC, PS2**
Publisher: **Ubi Soft**
Developer: **Crytek**
Origin: **Germany**
Release: **Q2 2003 (PC), TBC (Xbox, GC, PS2)**

Massive outdoor environments, deformable terrain with genuine gameplay implications. Crytek's promising FPS appears keen to take over from where Bungie's Halo left off









In woods, fleeing animals give away your position. Conversely, you can tell whether an enemy patrol has been around by looking for signs of flattened vegetation. Just two of the many great touches in *Far Cry*

The reputation of games that have sprung from mere tech-demos is far from awe-inspiring, conjuring images of virtual rolling demos with hastily inserted action segments. This isn't fair – ever since *Populous* emerged from a triangle-landscape routine, many great games have stepped from the primeval pool of a demo. And so it is with *Far Cry*, whose existence was previously seen in the *X-Isle* demo, which showed the power of the nVidia GeForce cards a year back, and is now powering this distinctive shooter.

CryENGINE's most touted feature is what the team describes as 'Polybump', a technique which creates the illusion of a considerably more detailed in-game character by wrapping a high-quality texture, which would normally be used for renders, over the standard low-poly model. While a walk around the floor at E3 reveals several games utilising similar techniques – not least *Doom III* – the team's approach uses models of 1500 polygons, a lower sum than most next-gen games, so allowing, when married to the power of the latest systems, many individual units to be displayed onscreen simultaneously.

This is of paramount importance in the areas where *Far Cry* will appeal to the gamer as much as the aesthete. As a whole, the game takes its lead from *Halo* rather than any of the more realistic recent PC shooters, aiming to include tactical decisions in a slightly more stylised way – the AI state of each of your opponents is as distinct as a Covenant warrior's head-shaking rage rather than the more muted *Flashpoint*. This is most important in the AI advances the game promises. Rather than the faked, scripted AI of the *Half-Life* marines, which used sound-signals to create the impression of a coordinated foe reactive to your actions, *Far Cry*'s soldiers act logically both as individual units, but also as a coherent force. **Edge** watches as a group of AI units work through the undergrowth – upon realising our position, the commander makes arm signals. Soldiers head off, trying to outflank us.

It also shares a taste for the widescreen with *Halo*. Only 30 per cent of the game is set indoors, with the rest in the verdant expanses of the islands. Since the engine allows miles of terrain to be explored, more large-scale events can be planned than in many of its competitors. As the desire for increased fidelity creates engines that are again limited to tight, claustrophobic environments, this taste for the Epic should help distinguish it from the mass of FPSs in 2003.

Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six: Raven Shield

Format: **PC**
Publisher: **Ubi Soft**
Developer: **Redstorm Entertainment**
Origin: **US**
Release: **November (UK)**

One of several promising Tom Clancy titles from Ubi Soft, Raven Shield increases the series' level of authenticity while trying to make the experience more accessible



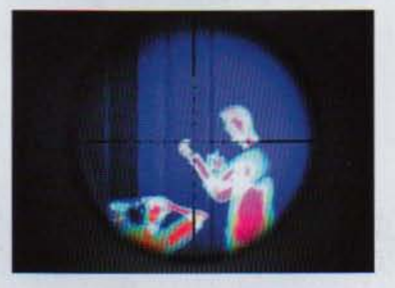
Firstperson view weapons and new movement commands (includes the prone position) – firsts for the *Tom Clancy* franchise. Also new are the weather and lighting effects seen in the 15 levels

Although console versions are set to follow, *Raven Shield* has understandably been designed with the PC firmly in the developer's mind (holding down control and moving the mouse leans your character's body around; or, as in *Splinter Cell*, doors can be opened discreetly but *RS* builds on this by attributing the action to the mouse wheel, meaning enemies can be shot through the smallest of apertures).

On a decent PC the Unreal Warfare engine technology (also found in Ubi Soft's *XIII*, see p73, and *Splinter Cell*, below) ensures graphically everything is up to scratch while also allowing FPS fans to switch from third to firstperson mode seamlessly. There are great touches, too, such as blurred vision resulting from tear gas or flash grenades (the latter also adds an effective 'ringing ear' audio layer).

Other improvements over previous *Tom Clancy* games include realistic modelling of the skeletal make-up of enemies so that, for instance, the bodies of soldiers shot off a warehouse walkway react authentically when hitting the crates below. Interestingly, other elements have been clarified (presumably as a way of combating the elitist reputation *Tom Clancy* titles have built themselves among less dedicated videogaming audiences). Thus, most of the screen icons have been removed and the control system has been simplified in favour of immediacy.





Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell

Format: **Xbox**
Publisher: **Ubi Soft**
Developer: **In-house (Studio Montreal)**
Origin: **Canada**
Release: **Q3 (UK)**

Another one of several Tom Clancy titles from Ubi Soft at E3, Splinter Cell enchanted many a game journalist







Retinal scanners, finger print key pads, 14 missions, 13 of the latest weapons (including the multipurpose F2000). Calling *SC* a '*MGS2* beater' as some were doing at the show seems rather premature but it's certainly looking very promising

It's easy to see why *Splinter Cell* proved popular with journalists at E3: consistently good visuals, even if occasionally displaying a tendency to rely on the angular (having said that, some of the effects are excellent); great attention to detail (shoot a fire extinguisher and watch as the foam spills realistically out of its pressurised container) and plenty of interesting touches (a visibility meter informs you of the likelihood of being detected by the enemy; the camera probe which when fired embeds itself in the wall to act as an additional pair of eyes) easily elevate this above the majority of thirdperson tactical action clones seen littering the E3 line-up.

If comparisons are required then *MGS2* would logically be its most likely target. Like Konami's primary franchise, *Splinter Cell* focuses on stealth and employs a control system that takes players a little time before its intricacies are embraced. As such, the slight clumsiness of play occasionally experienced when **Edge** tried out the game under show conditions is more likely to be the result of a curtailed familiarisation period than any area of genuine concern for the game's developer.

Indeed, other than perhaps a cautionary glance over the enemy AI (which appeared erratic on occasion), there didn't seem to be one particular aspect of *Splinter Cell* that presented itself as a potential problem – even the camera appeared to behave itself.

Prescreen Alphas **Edge**'s E3 coverage continues...

Dave Mirra XXX

Format: **PS2, GC, Xbox**
Publisher: **Acclaim**
Developer: **Z-Axis**



One of E3's surprises, Dave Mirra returns in adult-orientated form. The dark humour is funny, the crude jokes less so. There's a strip club, too

Zoocube

Format: **GC, GBA**
Publisher: **Acclaim**
Developer: **Puzzlekings**



Charming puzzler from **Edge**/Developers @Milia 2000 Competition winner Nalin Sharma, brought much needed variety to a mostly predictable E3

Gladius

Format: **PC**
Publisher: **Activision**
Developer: **LucasArts**



Despite innovative ideas, like a rhythm-action combo system, *Gladius* doesn't yet look like the finished article, but there's still time to get it right

Indiana Jones and the Emperor's Tomb

Format: **PC, Xbox, PS2**
Publisher: **Activision**
Developer: **LucasArts**



Indy's latest adventure certainly looks like it could be a competent title, but it currently lacks the spark that characterised the films

Medieval Total War

Format: **PC**
Publisher: **Activision**
Developer: **Creative Assembly**



Boasting a well balanced mixture of historical detail and finely honed play mechanics *Medieval Total War* even attracted Robin Williams to E3

Star Wars Bounty Hunter

Format: **PS2, GC**
Publisher: **Activision**
Developer: **LucasArts**



LucasArts's portrait of a bounty hunter as a youngish man currently looks like a solid, if uninspired thirdperson mix of stealth and action

Star Wars: The Clone Wars

Format: **PS2, GC**
Publisher: **Activision**
Developer: **LucasArts**



Not, as you might expect, a RTS, but more akin to *Rogue Leader* this should do justice to the licence. Yet it looks disappointingly formulaic

Tenchu 3

Format: **PS2**
Publisher: **Activision**
Developer: **K2**



New developer K2 appears to have done a good job of emulating the elements that made the original *Tenchu* superior to its immediate sequel

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4

Format: **PS2, GC, Xbox, GBA**
Publisher: **Activision**
Developer: **Neversoft**



Neversoft has wisely stayed away from tinkering with the now standard control mechanism for skating games. Bigger, better, more. Surprised?

True Crime: Streets of L.A.

Format: **PS2, GC, Xbox**
Publisher: **Activision**
Developer: **Luxoflux**



Not true crime in the sense of parking tickets, etc, obviously, but true crime in the sense of histrionic gun fights and bombastic showdowns

Catan

Format: **PS2**
Publisher: **Capcom**
Developer: **In-house**



Capcom aims to lead its online offering with this videogame version of a compulsively addictive, massively successful, German boardgame

Devil May Cry 2

Format: **PS2**
Publisher: **Capcom**
Developer: **In-house**



With little to go on but video footage, **Edge**'s interest is nevertheless piqued by a lavishly detailed urban rooftop setting and new character

JoJo's Bizarre Adventure

Format: PS2
Publisher: Capcom
Developer: In-house



Criticisms involving repetition of certain tasks aside, this seems a beautifully surreal 3D beat 'em up adventure with some lovely touches

Steel Batallion

Format: Xbox
Publisher: Capcom
Developer: In-house



As a measure of the verisimilitude offered by *Steel Battalion*, it should be noted that your mech requires about six buttons just to power up

Dragon Empires

Format: PC
Publisher: Codemasters
Developer: In-house



Codemasters' first MMRPG is shaping up nicely with good dynamically-weathered environments. No sign of the dragons yet, other than in shots

Tron 2.0

Format: PC
Publisher: Disney Interactive
Developer: Monolith



Not much more than a very pretty, but pretty limited, technical demo currently but things are looking good for the Monolith-developed title

Battlefield 1942

Format: PC, Xbox
Publisher: EA
Developer: Digital Illusions



Supporting up to 64 players, *Battlefield 1942* promises to be more authentically chaotic and confusing than the *Medal of Honor* series

Earth & Beyond

Format: PC
Publisher: EA
Developer: Westwood



EA's entry into the already oversubscribed MMRPG market offers players the chance to design and take control of their own spacecraft

Sim City 4

Format: PC
Publisher: EA
Developer: Maxis



Apart from updated visuals, it's not immediately obvious what sets this apart from its precursors, but even now, the *Sim* formula retains its appeal

Deus Ex II: Invisible War

Format: Xbox, PC, PS2
Publisher: Eidos
Developer: Ion Storm



One of the show's most promising titles, *Deus Ex II* looks intent on taking the uniqueness of its predecessor into whole new realms of playability

Republic: The Revolution

Format: PC
Publisher: Eidos
Developer: Elixir Studios



There was nothing else like it at E3. The only real worry is that Elixir's very ambitious, very clever sim may not appeal to many of today's gamers

Big Mutha Truckers

Format: PS2, Xbox
Publisher: Empire
Developer: Eutechnyx



Though it bears comparison to *Elite* and *GTAIII*, it's not quite as sophisticated as either. It could still be a lot of fun though, with a lot of character

Endgame

Format: PS2
Publisher: Empire
Developer: Cunning Developments



Lightgun games developed outside of Japan don't exactly have a long and illustrious history, but *Endgame* is more accomplished than most

Total Immersion Racing

Format: PS2, Xbox, PC
Publisher: Empire
Developer: Razorworks



Driving games proliferated at E3. *TIR*'s twist is that the other drivers 'remember' your actions and react (and seek revenge) accordingly

Star Ocean 3: Till the End of Time

Format: PS2
Publisher: Enix
Developer: In-house



Yet more proof that Enix manages to combine commercial with creative success, the chief innovation in this RPG is its realtime combat

D&D Heroes

Format: Xbox
Publisher: Infogrames
Developer: In-house



Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance, with which *Heroes* shares significant common ground, will be a tough act to follow, but early signs are positive

Superman

Format: Xbox, PS2
Publisher: Infogrames
Developer: Circus Freak Studios/In-house



Both of Infogrames's *Superman* titles were solid contenders, but in a show with so much quality, they didn't exactly soar above the competition

Terminator: Dawn of Fate

Format: Xbox, PS2
Publisher: Infogrames
Developer: Paradigm Entertainment



Not only did this look like an uninspired action title, it also abused the licence to the point of absurdity, boasting balsa wood Terminators

Unreal 2

Format: PC
Publisher: Infogrames
Developer: Legend Entertainment



Doom III stole the show, and showed up every other FPS there,but *Unreal 2* remains a viable, albeit technologically atavistic, competitor

Zapper

Format: PS2, GC, Xbox, PC, GBA
Publisher: Infogrames
Developer: Blitz Games



The spiritual successor to Frogger updates the avoid 'em up dynamic for the modern era with charming, and in all likelihood, addictive results

Crimson Sea

Format: Xbox
Publisher: Koei
Developer: In-house



Displaying Koei's characteristic willingness to throw ridiculous numbers of enemies onscreen, *Crimson Sea* consequently looks enthralling

Dynasty Tactics

Format: PS2
Publisher: Koei
Developer: In-house



Koei's bid to up the tactical ante of its *Dynasty Warrior* series may not be to everyone's tastes, but like its other titles, this is strangely enticing

Mystic Heroes

Format: GC
Publisher: Koei
Developer: In-house



Transposing the action from Japan to China, but preserving the mechanics of *Dynasty Warriors*, *Mystic Heroes* is similarly simple yet captivating

Contra: Shattered Soldier

Format: PS2
Publisher: Konami
Developer: In-house



All of the elements appear in place: sidescrolling, wall climbing, varying weapons, twoplayer relentless action and ridiculously huge bosses

Smash Cars

Format: PS2
Publisher: Metro3D
Developer: Creat Studios



Capturing the sparky handling of R/C buggies with aplomb, *Smash Cars* then places it in lightweight but quirkily amusing environments

Kakuto Chojin

Format: Xbox
Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: Dream Publishing



With Microsoft's other beat 'em up, *Tao Feng*, looking rather insipid, hopes are resting on *Kakuto Chojin*, but the characters are ant-like

Kung Fu Chaos

Format: Xbox
Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: Just Add Monsters



With four characters onscreen the action can occasionally become overly hectic and the camera doesn't help. Still, excellent presentation

Mech Assault

Format: Xbox
Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: In-house



Simplified arcade-style take on the *Mechwarrior* franchise, with some good atmospheric touches. Strategic elements do still creep in, thankfully

Quantum Redshift

Format: Xbox
Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: In-house



Not only graphically superior, the Xbox's answer to *Wipeout* currently feels more fun to play, too. Not as cool, perhaps, but clearly more vibrant

Defender

Format: PS2
Publisher: Midway
Developer: 7 Studios



Fans of the original will find it difficult to see hov this relates to the great sidescrolling shooter. The move to 3D doesn't appear to suit it. At all

Legion: Legend of Excalibur

Format: PS2
Publisher: Midway
Developer: In-house



Like so much that was on offer at the show, *Legion* is an efficient title that won't push back the boundaries of the form, but it's a lot of fun

1080° Snowboarding: White Storm

Format: GC
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: In-house



Shown in video form, *White Storm* didn't appear to offer anything remarkably new other than the ability to carve up skiers and escape avalanches

Mario Party 4

Format: GC
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: In-house



More fourplayer fun wrapped up in bright GC-powered visuals. Hardly a revolutionary title, but previous iterations have certainly entertained

KUF Crusaders

Format: Xbox
Publisher: Phantagram
Developer: In-house



Despite blocky textures, the massed carnage and rich character design merited significant attention from keen-eyed members of the press

Lamborghini

Format: Xbox, PS2, GC
Publisher: Rage
Developer: In-house



Handling needs minor tweaking but this feels very rewarding. Visuals and sense of speed are excellent. Course design also looks promising

Rocky

Format: Xbox, PS2, GBA
Publisher: Rage
Developer: In-house



For those that never got to experience the joy of *Rocky* on the Master System, Rage has cleverly developed a rather playable pastiche of the films

Twin Caliber

Format: PS2, Xbox
Publisher: Rage
Developer: In-house



Great idea and certainly addictive in an old skool manner but the control method does need some tinkering. Presently, it's disorientating at times

Beach Spikers

Format: GC
Publisher: Sega
Developer: Sega-AM2



At the end of each E3 day, crowds gathered in front of the giant Sega screen to admire *BS*'s toned and tanned ladies. But it played well, too

Crazy Taxi 3: High Roller

Format: **Xbox**
Publisher: **Sega**
Developer: **Hitmaker**



Nothing unexpected to report – control, visuals, and gameplay are all on track for Sega's frantic franchise to make its debut on Microsoft's Xbox

My Street

Format: **PS2**
Publisher: **SCE**
Developer: **Idol Minds**



A rather charming dayglo compilation of party games like *Dodgeball* and *Marbles* attests to the diversity of Sony's PlayStation2 software offering

Galleon

Format: **PC, Xbox, GC**
Publisher: **Titus/Vivendi**
Developer: **Confounding Factor**



An impressive sense of scale and character were still dogged at E3 by a framerate that was jerky in places, but *Galleon* is finally looking ready

Shinobi

Format: **PS2**
Publisher: **Sega**
Developer: **OverWorks**



The playable demo pods didn't give too much away, but *Shinobi*'s transition to 3D does appear to have been done with a little bit of panache

DoA Xtreme Beach Volleyball

Format: **Xbox**
Publisher: **Tecmo**
Developer: **Team Ninja**



Edge is dearly hoping that the obvious gratuitousness of *Xtreme Beach Volleyball* masks some compelling gameplay concepts

Robocop

Format: **PS2**
Publisher: **Titus/Vivendi**
Developer: **In-house**



Yet another FPS promising adaptive AI, a vast array of weapons, and 15 massive levels based on film locations. Expected out in October

Super Monkey Ball 2

Format: **GC**
Publisher: **Sega**
Developer: **Amusement Vision**



With fond memories, **Edge** can now consign 'It's a Knockout' to the dustbin of history, now that we've played Monkey Boat Race and Football

Ninja Gaiden

Format: **Xbox**
Publisher: **Tecmo**
Developer: **In-house**



The most attractive ninja title at the show, *Gaiden* sits midway between *Metal Gear Solid 2* and *Devil May Cry* in terms of action and stealth

BE&G (working title)

Format: **Xbox, PS2, GC, PC**
Publisher: **Ubi Soft**
Developer: **In-house (Studio Montpellier)**



From Michel Ancel, the mind behind the hugely popular *Rayman*, a seemingly delightful (and more than simply visually) adventure threatens

Dark Cloud 2

Format: **PS2**
Publisher: **SCEE**
Developer: **SCEI**



Largely similar to its predecessor, the chief innovations in *Dark Cloud 2* are a cel-shaded graphical hue, and an entertaining camera mode

Summoner 2

Format: **PS2**
Publisher: **THQ**
Developer: **Volition**



The main character is more of a transformer than a summoner, but Volition has clearly tightened things up to meet criticisms of the original title

XIII

Format: **PC, Xbox**
Publisher: **Ubi Soft**
Developer: **In-house (Studio Paris)**



Cel-shaded FPS with decent ideas of its own such as 'sixth sense': stand still for long enough and you can 'see' enemy positions through walls

Danger



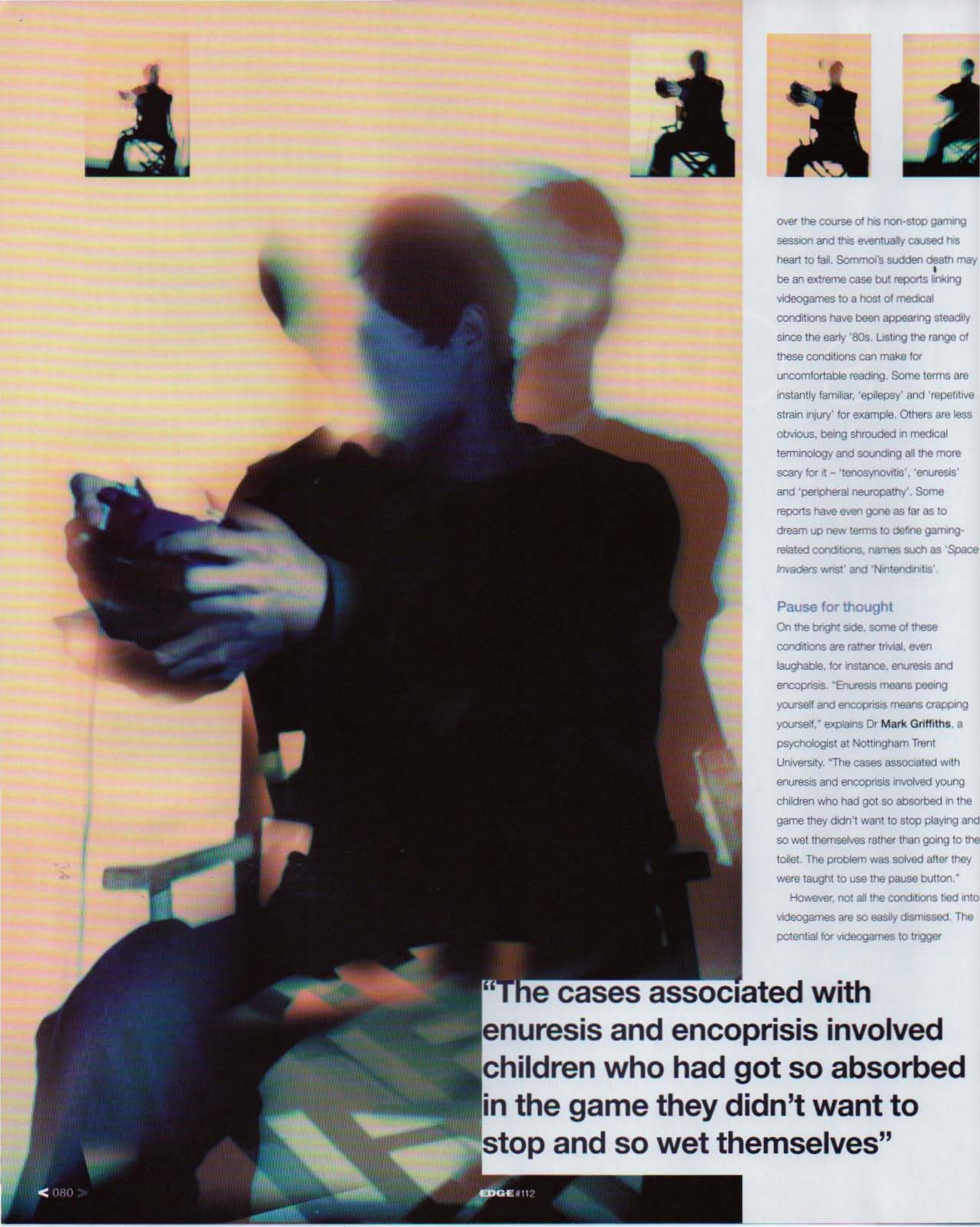
ous Game

You're unlikely to have read them but almost every game you buy will come with health warnings about everything from epileptic fits and skin irritation to various forms of repetitive strain injury. Are these just precautionary disclaimers for publishers or is there a real risk from gaming?

Friends found 22-year-old Thanet Sommoi slumped face down and unconscious on his keyboard at midday in a Internet cafe in the Thai city of Chaing Mai. They rushed him to hospital where, after failed attempts by doctors to revive the factory worker, he was pronounced dead. Sommoi's path to his death began the evening before when, having clocked off at the ceramic plant where he worked, Sommoi headed with some friends to an Internet cafe in Chaing Mai's San Kampaeng district.

Paying 15 batas an hour (roughly one and a half pence) Sommoi logged on for a networked game of *Half-Life* that would take him through the night and well into the next day. For Sommoi and his friends this kind of marathon gaming session was not uncommon. As usual Sommoi ordered food from the cafe to eat at his PC so he didn't have to stop playing. He continued playing through the night and the next morning, blasting apart the virtual representations of his fellow cafe-goers. Then at noon Sommoi collapsed from heart failure.

Police told reporters that they believed that Sommoi had developed tension and fatigue



over the course of his non-stop gaming session and this eventually caused his heart to fail. Sommoi's sudden death may be an extreme case but reports linking videogames to a host of medical conditions have been appearing steadily since the early '80s. Listing the range of these conditions can make for uncomfortable reading. Some terms are instantly familiar, 'epilepsy' and 'repetitive strain injury' for example. Others are less obvious, being shrouded in medical terminology and sounding all the more scary for it – 'tenosynovitis', 'enuresis' and 'peripheral neuropathy'. Some reports have even gone as far as to dream up new terms to define gaming-related conditions, names such as '*Space Invaders* wrist' and 'Nintendinitis'.

Pause for thought

On the bright side, some of these conditions are rather trivial, even laughable, for instance, enuresis and encoprisis. "Enuresis means peeing yourself and encoprisis means crapping yourself," explains Dr **Mark Griffiths**, a psychologist at Nottingham Trent University. "The cases associated with enuresis and encoprisis involved young children who had got so absorbed in the game they didn't want to stop playing and so wet themselves rather than going to the toilet. The problem was solved after they were taught to use the pause button."

However, not all the conditions tied into videogames are so easily dismissed. The potential for videogames to trigger

"The cases associated with enuresis and encoprisis involved children who had got so absorbed in the game they didn't want to stop and so wet themselves"





epileptic seizures is both well documented and warnings about this are now standard on every commercial game release. Dr **Arnold Wilkins**, a psychologist at the University of Essex, believes that those prone to epilepsy are at risks from videogames. "Games do trigger seizures and there is no way of pretending they do not," he states. "Of course, videogames do not cause epilepsy but trigger seizures in people who already have the condition. Around half a per cent of the population has been diagnosed with epilepsy, but there are a lot of people who haven't been diagnosed and if you include those, the percentage of the population with epilepsy could be more like two per cent."

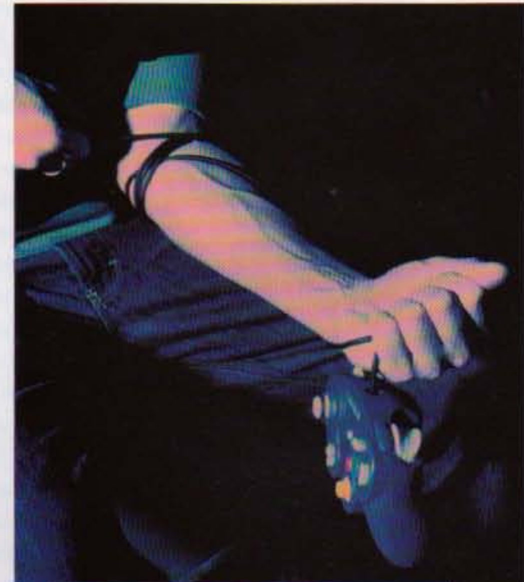
But to think that TV is as dangerous to the epileptic as videogames is wrong, adds Wilkins. "Videogames are worse than TV for two reasons. Firstly you sit closer to the screen when playing games than watching TV, which means the screen takes up a larger part of your field of vision. When close to the TV it is possible to see the interlace of the screen which has a frequency of 25Hz. This is more likely to cause an epileptic seizure especially when sitting there for long periods." The graphical content of videogames is also a problem. "The second reason why games are worse than TV when it comes to epilepsy is that videogame content includes things that strike the eye, like a quick flash, every time something explodes. The large area of screen in the player's vision coupled with the flashing are the things that have caused seizures."

Indeed, this 'flashing' element of videogames is something prohibited in TV. The Independent Television Commission, the body that regulates commercial broadcasters, has issued guidance (first agreed by broadcasters in 1994) on the use of flashing images and regular patterns. Wilkins says the highly technical rules set out by the ITC could, and should, be applied almost word-for-word to videogames, despite the industry's barrage of small text warnings. "Videogame content needs to be better informed and the videogame industry is shirking its responsibility," insists Wilkins. Despite the risks, the trade association representing videogame publishers, ELSPA, is doubtful of the need to follow the ITC's example. "It is not an issue as far as the industry is concerned," says **Roger Bennett**, director-general of ELSPA. "The UK government has conducted research into epilepsy and videogames. They decided that games can trigger epileptic fits just like any flashing lights and recommended there should be warnings that games can trigger symptoms of epilepsy. But there are other more pressing issues we need to address. However, if it became such an issue we would look at whether a code of practice is needed."

Repetitive actions

Although the number of people likely to be affected by seizures is low, the other effects of videogame graphics, such as motion sickness, remain under-researched. Of more concern is the relationship between the games and repetitive strain injury (RSI). RSI is actually a catch-all term for a range of conditions caused by repetitive actions – such as typing or repeatedly pressing a button on a mouse or joypad. Reports of gamers developing RSI conditions have been emerging since the '80s and a number of pseudo-medical names have been coined in response – most famously Nintendinitis (the proper medical name of which is tenosynovitis).

"Nintendinitis is caused by repeated use of the thumb on the joypad which places more stress on the tendons and causes the tendon to become inflamed," explains Dr **Donald Urquhart**, a specialist registrar in paediatrics at Harrow's Northwick Park Hospital. "It doesn't just



"Initial measurements, done while playing Rez on a PlayStation2, found that the controller vibration even enters the same range as that of chainsaws"



Many a gamer has spent mammoth sessions on Valve's *Half-Life*, but was the game really responsible for the death of Thanet Sommoi?



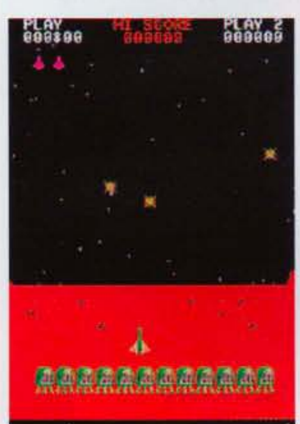


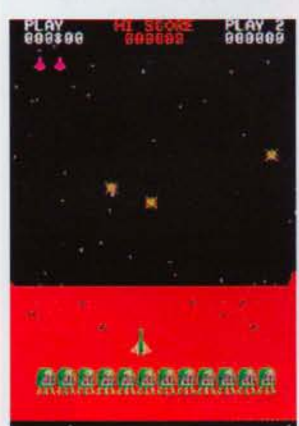




affect children. Anyone could get Nintendinitis from overuse of the controller. The condition can be painful and there may be swelling which can restrict activity. It can only heal by resting and if you continue to play the problem can remain."

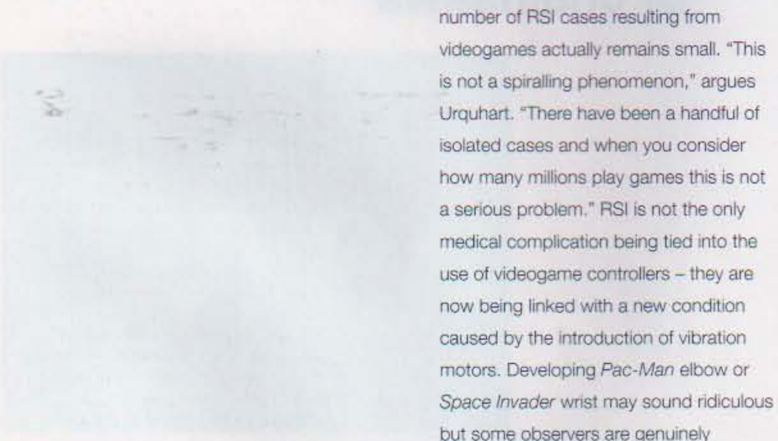
The extent of the problem is, however, a matter for debate. One Australian study warned that the western world faces an epidemic of RSI that could affect as many as three out of five people, while a study by Japan's Akita University suggested that one in five children aged six to 11 already have health problems induced by computer and console use. As with epilepsy, console manufacturers have sought to address the problem by including health warnings in the documentation, suggesting 15-minute breaks for every hour of gaming. But the reality is that hardly anyone reads them. **Jonathan Fargher**, spokesman for Sony Computer Entertainment Europe, admits there's little they can do. "We recommend people take regular breaks from playing but we cannot stand over every kid's shoulder to enforce that. We don't recommend long uninterrupted periods of play but people do it anyway," he sighs.





Dark Warrior – not the most fondly remembered coin-op from 1981, but it did give rise to the first report of an epileptic seizure from a videogame

Yet despite the conclusions of the Australian and Japanese studies, the number of RSI cases resulting from videogames actually remains small. "This is not a spiralling phenomenon," argues Urquhart. "There have been a handful of isolated cases and when you consider how many millions play games this is not a serious problem." RSI is not the only medical complication being tied into the use of videogame controllers – they are now being linked with a new condition caused by the introduction of vibration motors. Developing *Pac-Man* elbow or *Space Invader* wrist may sound ridiculous but some observers are genuinely concerned about this phenomenon.



In 1985 a condition afflicting workers using gas-powered chainsaws and pneumatic drills was declared an industrial disease. The affliction, caused by prolonged exposure to vibration, damaged arteries and nerves in the fingers and left the hands of sufferers white and painfully swollen. The rating of the condition, hand-arm vibration syndrome, as an industrial disease allowed those afflicted to claim compensation and disability benefit and eventually resulted in firms investing in antivibratory tools and changing their working practices.

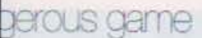
Bad vibrations

Then, earlier this year a 15-year-old boy turned up at the Royal Liverpool Children's Hospital with symptoms that appeared to suggest hand-arm vibration syndrome. In a 'British Medical Journal' report, doctors at the hospital described how the boy's hands became white and swollen when exposed to cold and then red and painful on warming. The problem had been going on for two years.

Doctors discovered that the symptoms appeared after the boy spent time on his PlayStation (up to seven hours a day) with the vibration option turned on. The case, believed to be the first of its kind, prompted the team to suggest that there may be a need for legally-enforced health warnings to advise players. However, **Roger Cooke**, a consultant in occupational medicine, is cautious about the findings. "The report was interesting and served to flag up the need for further investigation. However, I was surprised at the lack of correspondence produced by that report – one might have expected that if it was a major problem this report would have brought others to light. This does raise a question mark over the risks involved," he says.

Using any tool with a vibration level of $2.8m/s^2$ for eight hours (this includes a post-use period known as 'anger time' where the effects of exposure continue) is deemed as unsafe by the government. To put this figure into context, the average lawnmower vibrates at $3m/s^2$ while electric hammer drills (used to break up concrete) can reach $15m/s^2$. So how much kick would you expect a PlayStation2 controller to deliver? Certainly less than a drill to break up concrete and probably less than a common-or-garden Flymo.

According to **Paul Spandler**, a postgraduate student at Leeds Metropolitan University who is examining vibration levels of game controllers, it may be higher than you'd have guessed. Spandler's initial measurements, done while playing *Rez* on a PlayStation2, found that the controller can hit highs of as much as $3.65m/s^2$. This comfortably outstrips the lawnmower and even enters the same range as that of chainsaws (anything from 3.5 to $5.5m/s^2$). "It's significantly higher than I thought it would be, and overall it's on a par with a hand sander," states Spandler. "However, the vibration level is not constant like a power tool. Pulses tend to last about five



Gaming hypochondria

As well has causing medical conditions, games have also inspired new names for them. **Edge** checks out the rogue's gallery.

Dark Warrior Epilepsy
Named after one of the earliest reported cases of a videogame induced seizure where a 17-year-old girl had an epileptic fit while playing the coin-op *Dark Warrior* (1981, Century Electronics). Probably the only thing that *Dark Warrior* will be remembered for.

Space Invaders Wrist
First reported in 1981 in the 'New England Medical Journal', the arrival of *Space Invaders* wrist marked the first evidence of RSI caused by gaming.

Nintendo Neck
Essentially neckache caused by bad posture and long periods of play. Emerged in the mid-'80s when Nintendo's dominance of the games market meant it was the logical choice of name for the 'new' illness.

Pac-Man Elbow
Another term used to refer to gamers who develop RSI type conditions from the position of the arm while playing old style arcade machines, similar to tennis elbow.

Nintendinitis
Nintendo win again with the third RSI condition to be named after its videogaming cause. In real medicine the term is tenosynovitis and happens when repetitive finger movements cause inflammation of the tendon. This inflammation can result in acute pain and possible loss of function in the affected hand.

"Recent studies suggest that playing games can result in the release of dopamine, a chemical which affects a person's mood, into the brain"

seconds and happen every 30 seconds. This means it is difficult to measure, and therefore calculate, any risk this vibration has, since it changes all the time."

Courting controversy

Alongside physical ailments, videogames have been linked with psychological problems – particularly, violent behaviour and addiction. The evidence for violence has been hotly contested over the years and, as the dismissal of the lawsuit against game publishers that followed the Columbine massacre underlined, the feeling in the industry is that much of the research in this field is as half-baked as the lawsuit it inspired. The effects of videogames on violent behaviour is an area which is best examined in a dedicated feature, but the recent school shootings at Erfurt has once again brought this controversy to prominence.

In terms of videogame addiction, little is still known due to the lack of, rather than the quality of, research. Griffiths, one of the few academics who has investigated videogame addiction, believes such cases are rare. "The bottom line is that the prevalence is very small," he states. "And although there is a significant number of people who could be said to play excessively, excessiveness in itself does not equal addiction."

In a report, co-written with Dr Mark Davies for a forthcoming book, Dr Griffiths details four criteria for videogame addiction. First, people who play games to excess have poor imaginations. Second, addicted players play for the arousing or pacifying effect of the game. Third, addicted players play to excess because they have an addictive personality. Finally, videogame addiction consists of a distinct pattern of use and gratification and so addicts play to excess because they enjoy the physical act of playing or play only when they are bored.

Griffiths and Davies also theorise that there may be a chemical basis for such an addiction, pointing to recent studies suggesting that playing games can result in the release of dopamine, a chemical which affects a person's mood, into the brain. But the journey to reach a suitable definition of who is and who isn't a joystick junky is still ongoing.

But what of Sommoi, the Thai factory worker who played himself to death? Research certainly backs the idea that games can result in an increased heart rate. A study done in 1995 by Griffiths tracked the heart rates of students as they played an *Asteroids*-type game. The study found players' heart rates leapt

Photography: Martin Thompson

"There is a number of people who play excessively, but excessiveness does not equal addiction"



Reports that American youths were suffering from blisters after playing games such as *Mario Party* were taken so seriously by Nintendo that special gloves were considered. But the term Nintendinitis is rarely used now

significantly during the game and that in students with competitive personalities this jump was even more pronounced. Although as yet untested, Griffiths suggested that outside of a lab the rise in heart rate may be even bigger and noted that playing a retro game may not be comparable to the influence of a modern game. In addition, it's unclear whether these rises could be considered dangerous. So Sommoi's death remains a curiosity and rumours, reported in one Thai newspaper, claiming Internet cafes were putting drugs in the water to hook players only confuse matters further.

For most of us the biggest risk from gaming is some form of RSI, something **Bunny Martin**, head of RSI charity Body Action Campaign, claims is preventable. "Most of it is common sense like ensuring you have regular breaks – get up, go make a drink," she suggests. "Do hand exercises after playing – the general idea being to move your fingers and hands in the opposite direction to how you've been using them before. Be aware of pain or tingling in your arms, hands or thumbs." Regularly changing your position while playing and avoiding bending or twisting your neck is also important, she adds.

So, are hardened videogamers in any real danger? RSI and epileptic seizures are the only conditions that have been documented with some degree of rigour, and these risks are just as common in the workplace. Videogame addiction remains a grey area, though evidence of physiological cravings, which occur in other addictions such as alcoholism and smoking, have yet to be proven. And the risk of hand-arm vibration syndrome is a distinct possibility.

However, someone who played a videogame non-stop for eight hours is inviting trouble. It doesn't indicate that the pursuit itself is inherently dangerous. *Pac Man* elbow and *Space Invaders* wrist are bad enough. But just imagine the danger of playing too much *Halo*…

HEALTH AND SAFETY OF GAMES CONTROLLERS

Edge asked ergonomics consultancy InterAction of Bath to cast its eye over the latest batch of controllers and assess the health and safety issues of the devices. Here's what it came back with

INTRODUCTION

Four games controllers (Playstation2, Xbox, GameCube and Game Boy Advance) were assessed by InterAction of Bath Ltd against a range of ergonomic criteria. This report summarises the findings of the assessment.

Clearly, it is essential that players can hold the controllers comfortably and can reach the buttons and triggers. This is known as anthropometric compatibility. Given the large range of possible hand sizes (the middle finger of a 5 percentile Japanese female is 30 per cent shorter than that of a 95 percentile US male), it has been achieved reasonably well in the devices assessed. Another consideration is the force required to activate the buttons and triggers. Higher forces increase the strain on the fingers and thumbs and therefore increase the risk of injury.

More important than anthropometric compatibility or trigger/button forces is the duration of play – and unfortunately there is a tendency to play videogames for very long periods. Although there has been little specific research into games controllers, evidence from studies of similar activities or devices (laptops, palmtops, etc) indicates that the type of repetitive actions involved can increase the risk of tendinitis or tenosynovitis – inflammations of the tendon and the synovial membrane of the tendon sheath, respectively. Inflammation leads to pain, tenderness and loss of function. Affected areas are:

- The insertion of the tendons of the finger extensor muscles at the elbow. This is known as tennis elbow or lateral epicondylitis.
- The tendons of the thumb at the wrist. This is DeQuervain's tendinitis. The thumb is used predominantly in each of the controllers assessed.

The whole-body posture of the games player is also important to health. Many players adopt static, awkward arm and back postures, which decrease the blood flow in the muscles and can lead to acute pain and muscular fatigue. It is important to remember to change position frequently and to minimise neck bending and twisting. Perhaps a health warning should be displayed on the screen every 15 minutes, although where this has been tried for data-entry tasks it has proved unpopular.

Each of the manufacturers produces a vast amount of health and safety literature, in a way confirming the risk. For example, the PlayStation manual informs users to stop playing if they get pains in their arms or hands, and recommends that breaks be taken at about 30-minute intervals. The Game Boy Advance manual advises: "Listen to your body." Such advice is correct, but it seems unlikely that the games player will read it.

While there is a moral obligation on the part of the manufacturers to provide devices that are comfortable and safe, it is unreasonable and indeed impossible for manufacturers to design and produce devices that will accommodate all users' habits. Even the best office chair will (eventually) become uncomfortable for even the most able-bodied.

THE COMPARISON

PLAYSTATION2

Playstation2 has a lightweight, well-designed controller with accessible triggers and controls. The vibration function (which can exacerbate a range of hand-arm conditions, from arthritis to vibration white finger) can be turned off.

XBOX

The Xbox is the largest and heaviest of the controllers assessed. Indeed, some users have complained that it is too large and heavy, though there is no evidence to link the extra size or weight to deleterious outcomes.

The black and white analogue buttons are difficult to reach in US/UK devices and are better positioned in the Japanese model. The action of the triggers is heavy and potentially hazardous with prolonged use. Of the four controllers reviewed, this one comes with the most comprehensive health warnings.

GAMECUBE

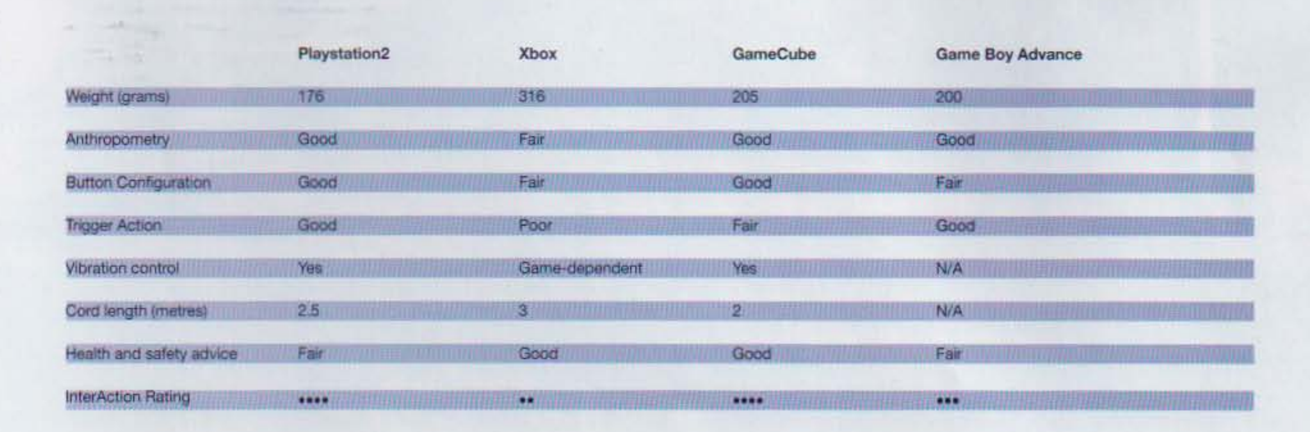
GameCube has a controller similar in size and weight to the PlayStation2. It is also possible to turn off the vibration function to reduce the risk of hand-arm injury. The manufacturer's warning gives instructions to avoid tendonitis, carpal tunnel syndrome and skin irritation.

GAME BOY ADVANCE

Game Boy Advance is a lightweight, well-designed gaming interface with good button action. Being self-contained, the Game Boy Advance can be used on laps, tables, beds (or indeed anywhere) so increased neck flexion angles are required to view the screen. Such postures are linked to increased discomfort of the neck and upper back. Therefore, it is not only local muscle groups (intrinsic and extrinsic finger muscles) that are at risk of overuse injuries, but also the larger muscle groups in the neck and upper back.

SUMMARY

There were few important differences between the controllers from an ergonomic point of view. The PlayStation and the GameCube controllers earned good marks for their anthropometry and the button layout. The large size and weight of the Xbox controller counted against it, but this device came with the best safety advice. Is there a connection here?



	Playstation2	Xbox	GameCube	Game Boy Advance
Weight (grams)	176	316	205	200
Anthropometry	Good	Fair	Good	Good
Button Configuration	Good	Fair	Good	Fair
Trigger Action	Good	Poor	Fair	Good
Vibration control	Yes	Game-dependent	Yes	N/A
Cord length (metres)	2.5	3	2	N/A
Health and safety advice	Fair	Good	Good	Fair
InterAction Rating	••••	••	••••	•••

Edge's review policy

Every issue, **Edge** evaluates the best, most interesting, hyped, innovative or promising games on a scale of ten, where five naturally represents the middle value. **Edge**'s rating system is fair, progressive and balanced. An average game deserves an average mark – not, as many believe, seven out of ten. Scores broadly correspond to the following sentiments: zero: nothing, one: disastrous, two: appalling, three: severely flawed, four: disappointing, five: average, six: competent, seven: distinguished, eight: excellent, nine: astounding, ten: revolutionary.

Edge's PC is an Intel 1.7GHz / 1 Gig RAM / GeForce3, kindly provided by **iwantitnow.co.uk**

Edge's most played

Broken Sword

Though bugs have beset **Edge**'s attempts to get to the bottom of its mysterious medieval plot, *Broken Sword's* easy pacing kept us coming back for more.



(GBA) Bam! Entertainment

Championship Manager Season 01/02

Edge's attempts to prevent AFC Bournemouth from following their real world counterparts into football's basement division failed. It hurt even more this time.



(Xbox) Eidos

Final Fantasy X

It may be the most linear in the series to date, but glorious visuals, relaxing gameplay and some good characterisation keep the eyes open most of the time.



(PlayStation2) Square

TimeSplitters2

A playable demo gives **Edge** a chance to examine the spy-hard dynamic of Free Radical's eagerly anticipated work, and it's sumptious. Next stop: multiplayer.



(PlayStation2) Eidos

Where are we going?

And are we nearly there yet?

As **Edge** writes this, it's E3, and that means everyone's looking to the future. As usual, sequels dominate the stands and the hyperbole-filled Web bulletins. Here's a theory: there are two types of gamer – the minority, who want the thrill of the new now, and the majority, who are prepared to wait until it's better. The former looks for innovation over polish, and looks for the future. The latter seeks more than instantaneous satisfaction, and knows that balance is just as important as creativity. And balance often arrives in sequels.

Of course, sometimes, rarely, games appear in Testscreen that express both modernism and the sort of polish that provides lasting appeal, such as *Halo* or *Mario 64*. Naturally, they score highly. This month, the high scores go to *MotoGP*, *DDR MAX* and *Armored Core 3*. Are they really offering much that gamers haven't seen before? No, but they're refinements of very specific concepts, and it's through improving on mistakes made by their forebears that they're so well constructed and balanced. They're also completely pure, focusing on one element each: fast riding, manic dancing, and that much-loved doctrine of gaming, controlling big robots with big guns.

Fatal Frame, on the other hand, is a patchwork quilt of game dynamics, *Luigi's Mansion* and *Polaroid Pete* and *Silent Hill* all stitched together with a smartly woven ghost story. And sometimes the pieces hang awkwardly; the combat is clumsy, the storytelling fractured. But it's trying something different – trying to move away from the traditional survival horror tenets of violence and clearly-stated evisceration, towards something a little smarter – and that sort of creativity will both reward daring gamers, and provide a solid base for other developers to build on in the future.

Still, at the end of all the admiration for innovation, a game has to be rated on the quality of entertainment it provides to the player. That entertainment might be more intense, momentarily spectacular if the delights the game offers are new, but it's rarely as polished or rewarding as that provided by the type of game that's been honed for years and years. That's the problem with the future: sometimes you have to wait a long time for it to arrive.











Soldier of Fortune II: Double Helix

Format: **PC** Publisher: **Activision** Developer: **Raven Software** Price: **£35** Release: **Out now**





Predictably, Raven's latest shooter is awash with all the latest and greatest international ordnance. Single-handed weapons can be mixed and matched for a cocktail of calibres

The relentless march of 'realism' in PC games has led to the portrayal of violence being ramped up to repulsive proportions. Hunks of *Quake*-meat and *Kingpin*'s pain skins portraying character injury have given way to increasingly sophisticated realisations of human dismemberment. And Raven Software has developed the most complex system for the implementation of violence so far, in this, the second of the real world shooters inspired by the gun-fetishism of 'Soldier of Fortune' magazine. It's hard to see this as a good thing, but if you can overcome the seductive taboos warning against violent entertainment, then you'll find the gore makes up just one part of an impressive canvas.

This technology has been bolted into the *Quake III* engine and, to be fair, it's largely pointless. Most of the time you'll be too far away to really see the effects and you'll only be impressed or disgusted if you stand over corpses mutilating them or shoot someone in the face at point-blank range.

It might seem that this is a cheap selling point that actually plays little part in this tale of international bio-warfare espionage and gun-toting US imperialist action. But what it does achieve is to make *SoFII* into one of the most brutal and intimidating firstperson experiences to date. The deaths are shocking and believable. The feel of the weaponry and the savagery of combat inject some much-needed excitement into what is otherwise a predictable game. *SoFII* benefits from a great 'feel' – the guns happily matching up to the frenetic fun of *Halo*'s assault rifle, *MoH: Allied Assault*'s punchy sniper-rifle or the finely-tuned clatter of *Counter-Strike*'s many machine-guns. The experience of battle is much more jolting and solid than anything we've seen on the PC before – there's a genuine feeling of danger and violence which, putting moral concerns aside, makes for an entertaining experience.

However, *SoFII* is never consistent. Some of the set pieces feel like contrived puppetry and the story itself is appalling. Not only that but there are minor bugs in AI and some rough edges in the execution of levels that are simply frustrating, and sadly typical of Raven's recent spate of FPS games. Firstperson shooters have always relied on

There's a genuine feeling of danger and violence which, putting moral concerns aside, makes for an entertaining experience











SoFII's AI works well most of the time and your enemies will retreat or throw back grenades. They've learned all the genre tricks too, throwing over tables or leaping low objects to get the best of the cover

level-design genius to save them from mediocrity and in *SoFII* the light of that genius burns rather dimly. It's not as bad as some of the *Jedi Knight II* levels perhaps, but it's still not as good as it should be.

Furthermore, player-death is all too frequent. Trip-bombs and unseen grenades unfairly end many actions, leading you straight back to the quick-save key. Many scenes, such as the chase with you manning a gun on the back of a lorry, feel arcade-inspired, detracting from the realistic milieu that dominates all other aspects of the game. This happens again when you encounter boss characters. Why should some characters be supernaturally tough when the rest of the game sees heads exploding like watermelons? It's a poor design move and one that feels rushed and unsure of itself. It's staggering to think that games producers will work so hard on creating an evocative consistent and visceral world, only to throw in a couple of indestructible gangsters to make things more 'interesting'.

The one other notable, and slightly bizarre, feature in *SoFII* is that Raven has attempted to implement a random mission generator. It's a simple system that takes a few simple parameters and then generates a bland or flawed map for you to play on. Presumably this is aimed at extending the life of the singleplayer game, but it feels like a waste of time. So another defective PC shooter then, brutal, but never deluxe.

Edge rating: Six out of ten



The device seen above is one of the latest gadgets in the American military evolution – the focus of the 'Land Warrior' project which inspired Novalogic's latest shooter

Play your own game

Raven's handiwork demands much of a PC system and only the more modern pixel-kicking GeForce3-laden generation will be able to make the most of it. But that world does have some treats in store – the huge depth of conversations NPCs will get into if undisturbed (all in their natural languages) or the blast of Wagner of the helicopter loud-speakers as you thunder down a jungle valley. The chat and facial animations of in-game characters is unsurpassed in any PC game presently available. Although *Unreal 2* should change that.



Armored Core 3

Format: **PlayStation2** Publisher: **From Software** Developer: **In-house** Price: **¥6,800 (£35)** Release: **Out now (Japan), TBC (UK)**

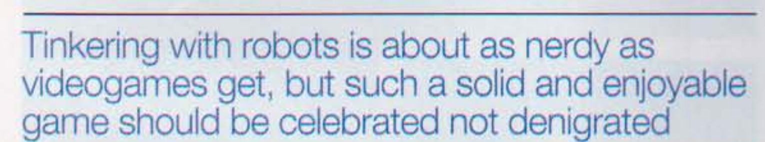


The garage offers opportunities to purchase weapons, such as the bazooka (top) and even design the layout of your Raven's HUD (above). Metro3D will publish *AC3* in the UK

There are moments in *Armored Core 3* that will leave you exasperated. The flow of the game is simple: build a mech warrior to overcome the difficulties experienced in individual missions. However, credit is required to buy parts and in early segments of the game you'll have to make do with a rudimentary gun and a laser blade.

Upgrade wisely and most missions will be cleared without too much trouble, but overstretch your resources and progress can be a struggle. Making the wrong decision at a key juncture in the game can be disastrous. You might bludgeon your way through a couple of operations using an expensive bazooka arm attachment, but it's then possible to be confronted with a situation that requires more subtlety and agility. With little credit left, you may regret the decision not to leave some money aside for a powerful booster.

However, this is the aspect that makes the *Armored Core* series so engaging. A shrewd approach often pays dividends and good decision making is incredibly rewarding. Admittedly, next to *Microsoft Train Simulator* tinkering with robots is about as nerdy as videogames get, but such a solid and enjoyable game premise should be celebrated not denigrated. *Armored Core 3* is certainly not for everyone, but while some may find the seemingly endless customisation possibilities onerous they'll be others who won't even give it a try. A real pity, because the third *Armored Core* game to appear on PS2 is deep, inventive and immensely satisfying.



Tinkering with robots is about as nerdy as videogames get, but such a solid and enjoyable game should be celebrated not denigrated



At key points in the game you may have to overcome a fearsome boss character to progress. Sometimes they come in the form of traditional mechs... others resemble giant spiders

On the surface there have been few major changes from *Armored Core 2*, or its update, *Armored Core 2: Another Age* (see p101). Sorties from the Mission mode can be selected to earn more credits to enhance the initial Raven. However, in key missions the faction supporting your assignment will offer a number of consorts to help overcome the foe. These range from heavily armoured ground-based mechs to agile jet fighters that can provide cover when the going gets particularly tough.

Of course, such assistance doesn't come free of charge and every extra consort you select will reduce the overall payment once the mission ends. Significantly, armour damage and ammo expenditure are deducted from the final reward and failing a mission can have a serious impact on your bank balance. Regular data saving is therefore recommended.

Armored Core 3 also introduces more mid-mission cut-scenes and scripted events to raise the tension and prevent things from becoming too predictable. One notable commission invites the player to explore the bowels of a grounded tanker. But once deep into the hull the ship begins to leak water and the player must complete the mission and escape back out through the entry point within a strict time limit. The eerie groaning that the tanker's hull makes as you descend is an inspired touch.

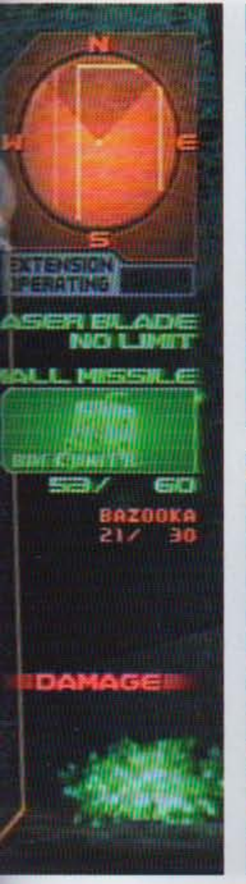
Arena combat returns and offers a good change of pace from the Mission mode. A number of ranked challengers can be taken on until you reach the top of the league ladder. Cleverly, the bouts can be replayed from the opponent's perspective and often reveal weapon effects and tactics that can be assimilated and used to your advantage at a later stage. There are also rewards in the form of extra Raven parts once key challengers are defeated.

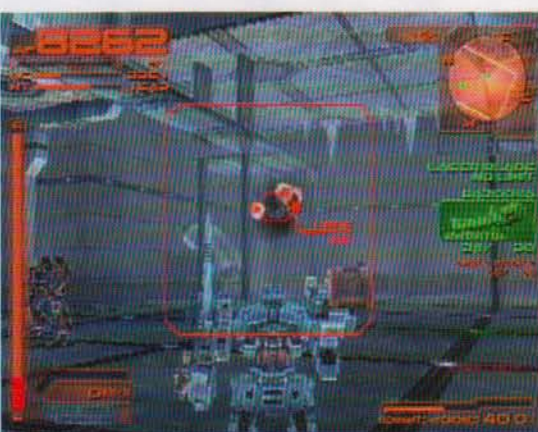
While your Raven can be cumbersome in early stages the controls never feel over-complicated. And in true *Armored Core* style, customisation with advanced parts such as turning boosters will soon relieve much of the early frustration. Those in any doubt about the series' appeal should put aside their preconceptions: *Armored Core 3* is one of the most comprehensive videogames you are likely to play this year.

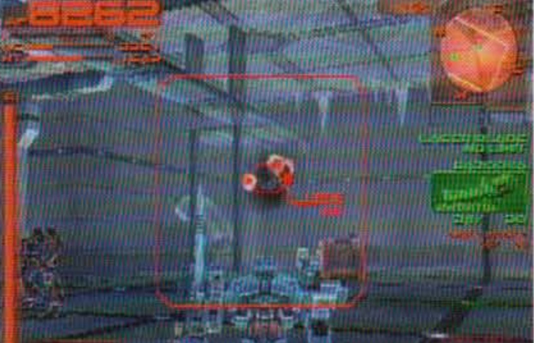


The *Armored Core* series is for those who never experienced the delights of Mechano. Refining your mech is arguably the best part of the game

Edge rating: Eight out of ten











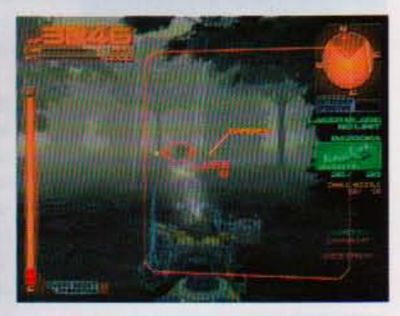






The armour points (AP) of your Raven is displayed in the top left corner of the HUD. If it reaches zero, the mission is a failure. Repairs made after every mission incur costs so caution is recommended





Environments range from dam complexes to forest swamps. One of the only weaknesses of the game is when you step outside the area of operations – which results in mission failure and lengthy loading

Good head

A good radar is vital for most missions in the game. However, there will be times when your mech will be completely lost even if a limited radar is in use. Enter a particularly dense jungle or maze complex and it is advisable to use a head with an auto map memory function. Although likely to be expensive it can pay dividends in the long run.



The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind

Format: **PC (reviewed), Xbox** Publisher: **Ubi Soft** Developer: **Bethesda Softworks** Price: **£35** Release: **Out now (PC), TBC (Xbox)**

Morrowind is a game that enrages and enthrals in almost equal measure. Ironically, its greatest strength is also a fundamental weakness. Players are granted the untrammelled opportunity to explore a large, lovingly crafted gameworld that features a coherent and satisfyingly complex political and sociological structure. Its most significant achievement is that there are few strictures: players are able to define the terms with which they interact with this gameworld to an unprecedented degree. But at times this sense of freedom is overwhelming, and attending to the minutiae can be tiresome.

As a whole, the game is something of a curate's egg, which will have you alternately grinning with satisfaction and groaning with despair









Despite the promise of utter freedom, play is still constrained by cumbersome menus, shoddy AI and an extremely unrefined and banal combat system

Players are eased into *Morrowind*'s sumptuous universe with ease. After being transported to an island in the titular province, character creation is ingenious and comprehensive, with a variety of races and careers to choose from. From this point on, it's up to players to make their own way through the game – investigating the plot as it suits them, and exploring the surroundings at their own leisure. The game imposes no moral straitjacket, and negotiations with the game's many social factions are free. The use of a firstperson perspective heightens the sense of immersion, and some neat interface design reinforces it.

For example, conversation is conducted via hotlinked topics and a journal provides easy access to pertinent information. The combinatorial magic system is vast, and learning its intricacies could be a game in itself, while a sizeable network of stores provides for all adventuring needs. Guilds and factions lend a useful framework within which to explore, and random encounters are tailored towards your character's current strength. Although it demands careful and sustained play, this level of freedom provides many moments of gaming bliss, and at times it can be a joyful experience.

Sadly though, this isn't always the case. For a start, combat is a horrid, stodgy mess, with a presumably complicated but apparently arbitrary statistical system barely masked by random mouse-clicking – totally defeating any sense of involvement engendered by the firstperson view. In order to manage the inventory and consume potions mid-battle, players are wrenched into a well-intentioned but ultimately overcomplicated set of drag-and-drop menus that further undermine any sense of engagement. Additionally, horribly simplistic AI routines conspire to sap the joy from the game, with NPCs steaming into combat with staggeringly little thought (it doesn't occur to them to go through doors, for example).



Although the use of textures and highly detailed character models is technically proficient, it's hardly aesthetically endearing; the world of *Morrowind* is largely composed of different variations of brown

More significantly, the vast open-endedness of the game world, combined with a totally freeform goal structure can result in long periods of aimless wandering and abject confusion, and the finer points of the game's sociological composition can prove perplexing. Also, it's too easy to waste time, items and effort pursuing a set-piece encounter before realising that it's been designed with a much more experienced character in mind, and though there are quick (instantaneous in fact) modes of transport, the hours spent wandering through a largely brown and murky universe quickly become dispiriting. Perhaps the biggest disappointment is that the promise of being able to adopt a variety of approaches, from fast-talking merchant, through quick-fingered rogue, to sorcerous spell-caster, isn't realised. It's still the case that a slightly magical warrior is the most effective choice. Which all rather undermines the many sublime moments that *Morrowind* offers.

As a whole, the game is something of a curate's egg, which will have you alternately grinning with satisfaction and groaning with despair. It's certainly a consuming title, and any disappointments are a testament to the game's many strengths, but ultimately *Morrowind* proves less satisfying than the sum of its parts.

Edge rating: Six out of ten















Despite an extensive and intuitive character creation system, it's all too easy to to pick a character to which your style of play is unsuited, and thanks to a lazily erratic learning curve (or, more accurately, squiggle), most players will in all likelihood choose to start the game again, if they still have the patience

Negotiating the complicated geography of *Morrowind* is made easier by various modes of transport but it's still too easy to become confused or bored by a monodynamic approach to textural variation

Play your own game

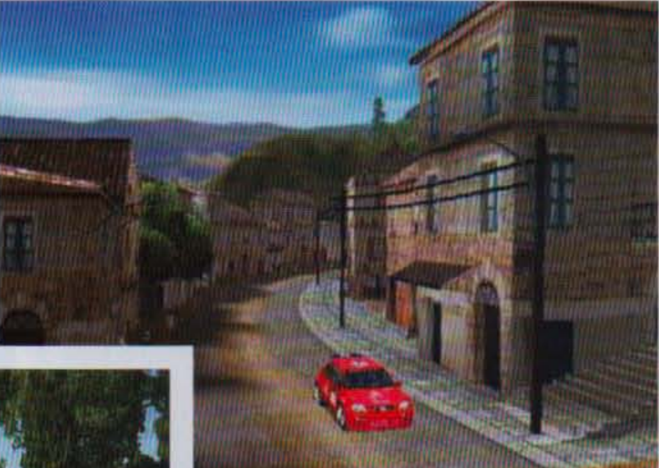
As with any PC title worth its salt, the PC version of *Morrowind* (though not the Xbox version, take note) comes complete with its own toolset, enabling players to augment or modify the boxed game. New encounters can be added, or the finer details of the game tinkered with, and plug-ins containing new features are already available on the developer's Website. It's not as intuitive as BioWare's Aurora toolset (see **E**111), but it will extend the already massive *Morrowind* experience.



V-Rally 3

Format: **PlayStation2** Publisher: **Infogrames** Developer: **Eden Studios** Price: **£40** Release: **Out now** Previously in **E107**









As is the current trend (and rightly so), the third iteration of the *V-Rally* franchise focuses on enhancing the player's role and involvement within the game world.

It pulls it off, too. The main mode sees you checking your email inbox for potential team offers (you start off in the 1.6 litre 2WD category) – pick one, pass the test and you're in. Cue cut-scene of the team's press unveiling and your first taste of the superb level of presentation throughout. From detailed sequences of the service areas to the way elements of the set-up screen are animated to illustrate the effect on car behaviour of your decisions, every significant event of the rallying environment is included. The resulting sense of atmosphere is remarkably conveyed.

The amount of detail, too, is notable. Navigating the set-up screens may be a little laborious but without verging into simulation territory, the level of choice on offer is beyond the vast majority of console-based rally offerings. Tyre pressure, 12 selections of rubber, brake balance, ride height, stabilisers, bodykit and a few others are all adjustable (and all licensed parts).

When you eventually get to the start gate of the stage, shortly before you realise how impressive the sensation of speed is, you'll notice much attention has been paid to how the game presents itself visually. Whereas *WRC*'s environments, while very pretty, often came across as overly clinical here they feel alive and easily as graphically accomplished. Their design is often better, too, ensuring an exhilarating, hazard-filled journey on most occasions (and even more so when the pace notes aren't delivered on time).

Regrettably, the one area that misfires is the handling. Previous *V-Rally* games have always felt floaty but times have moved on and here there's a worrying disassociation between your vehicle and the road surface at all times. The excessive sensitivity of the default steering option can quickly be overcome with a trip to the set-up menu but no matter how much you play around with car settings the lightweight feeling never gets eradicated. Knowing how much you can push before the front and rear wheels swap places becomes a frustrating guessing game (and at times the vehicle's behaviour is questionable). And in this case it's particularly infuriating because every other element of *V-Rally 3* appears so accomplished.

Edge rating: Six out of te



No foreplay

In addition to the main game, the usual other options turn up but of particular interest is the Time Attack which presents a series of challenges for you to beat. It's a nice extra should you find yourself booted out of the Career mode earlier than expected and fancy something a little more immediate. However, notable by its absence is the lack of a simultaneous multiplayer option. *V-Rally 3* does cater for one to four players but it's a straight turn-based affair which obviously is unlikely to please some individuals.



A good game but one that so easily could have been great. Cars sometimes overreact to trackside objects but it's good to see some interaction (eg barriers get broken). The quality of the sound effects is excellent

MotoGP: Ultimate Racing Technology

Format: **Xbox (reviewed), PC** Publisher: **THQ** Developer: **Climax Brighton** Price: **£45** Release: **Out now**

Previously in **E**105, **E**110

Having played promising preview code of *MotoGP: Ultimate Racing Technology* in **E**110, **Edge** had its fingers crossed for Climax' take on bike racing. Thankfully, the finishing straight doesn't seem to have posed the developer any major problems.

In an age of multiformat franchises, *MotoGP* bucks the trend and delivers an experience that's been fully optimised for its host platform – if only because Namco hold the MotoGP licence for PS2. Nevertheless, the sport's first Xbox appearance is a persuasive argument for single format development. Making full use of the technical features provided by Microsoft's hardware, it feels like a tailor-made Armani next to the off-the-peg nature of so many racing games.

The draw distance stretches so far towards the horizon that it's no longer a problem but something to be admired. The textures, too, are impressively rich, although not immediately noticeable at high speed – it's often only during the replays that one notices the great levels of detail evident on the road surface, gravel traps and tyres.

More importantly, the tightly packed field of 20 bikers screams its way around each circuit at a ludicrously fast pace, making for some unusually competitive racing. Indeed, qualifying becomes vitally important when the fight for positions is as intense as it is here. On the higher difficulty settings it can take three laps of brilliant riding to overtake only one or two opponents, while a single badly taken corner often results in losing well over five places.

But while the racing is difficult, it's rarely frustrating, thanks to an excellent control method that makes full use of the Xbox pad. Front and rear brakes are each designated to a trigger, while the left and right sticks allow the player to shift the rider's position on the bike and progressively accelerate, respectively. Precise control over each aspect of the bike's handling allows for infinitesimal adjustments to the racing line, making for a correspondingly high degree of satisfaction when a well-taken corner leads to several opponents being overtaken.

Making further use of the Xbox, a superb LAN multiplayer mode is included alongside the usual splitscreen options (although sadly it only allows one player per Xbox), and unlockable rewards provide yet more reason for extended play. In short, it's a podium finish – just as **Edge** hoped.

Edge rating: Eight out of ten

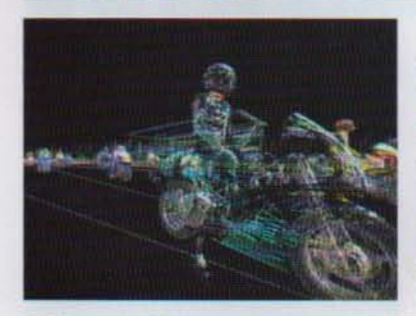








The firstperson view (left) provides some of *MotoGP*'s most spectacular moments, though it does makes it harder to judge the racing line





Both human and CPU riders are far more prone to falling from their machines on tougher difficulty settings – leading to a more realistic (and unpredictable) experience. Rack up enough points during the game and you will be suitably rewarded with many novelties, including wireframe (left) and pop video (right) filters



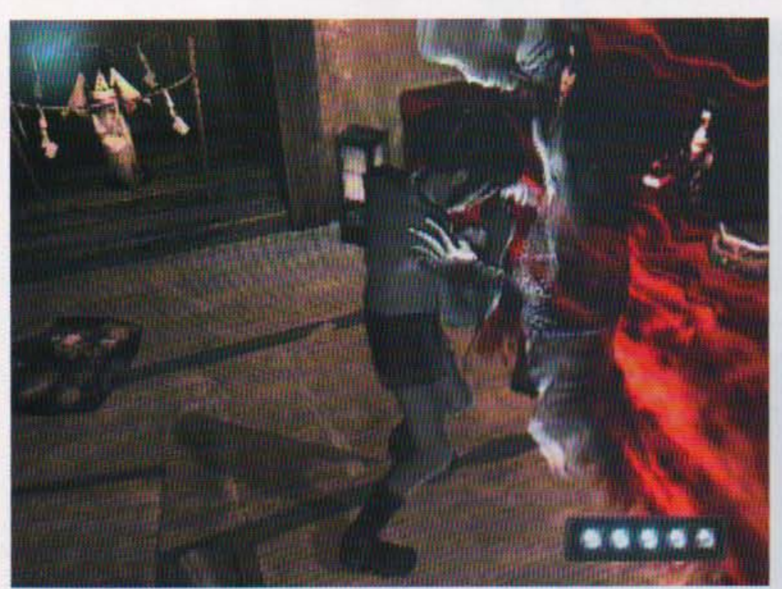
Learn to turn

Much of *MotoGP: URT*'s long-term appeal stems from mastering the control method and taking on the perfectly pitched difficulty levels. The 'Pro' difficulty seems practically impossible at first, let alone the trickier 'Champion' setting. But winning positions on these modes do steadily become more attainable.

Growing ever more adept at throwing the bike around corners with the minimum loss of speed is just as satisfying as beating high-level opponents. And for those that do eventually find themselves winning the Champion season, the hidden Master mode should put an end to any misguided notions of expertise.

Fatal Frame

Format: **PlayStation2** Publisher: **Tecmo** Developer: **In-house** Price: **$50 (£34)** Release: **Out now (US), TBC (UK)**



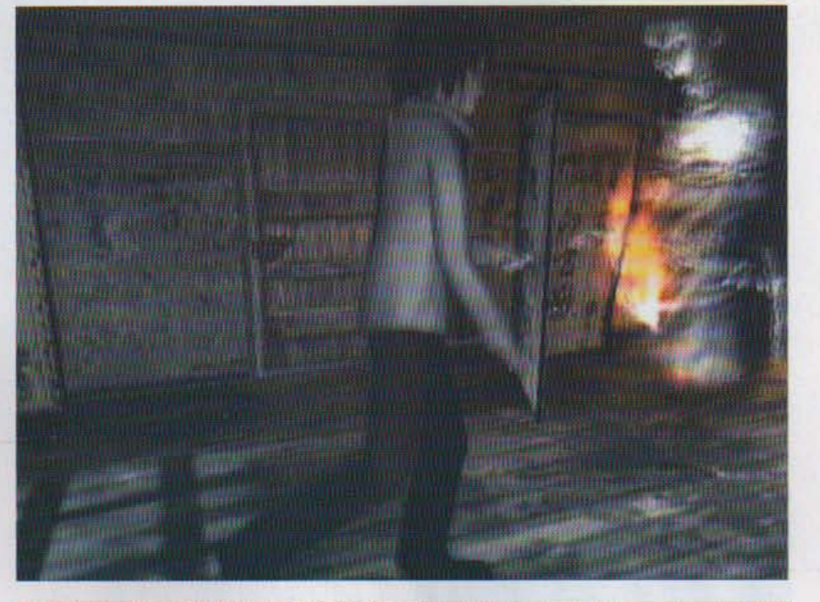








On encountering a spirit, the player must switch perspective and take a picture. More damage is inflicted if you hold on for the perfect shot







Due to be published in the UK as *Project Zero* by Wanadoo, *Fatal Frame* offers the same dismal locales as other survival horror tales, but stresses fear over gore. It's less of a horror film, and more of a ghost story

The setting is quintessential survival horror, casting the player as Miku, a young Japanese girl investigating the disappearance of her brother at an abandoned mansion. The superficialities of the experience hardly set the game apart from its genre rivals either: Hitchcockian fixed cameras, shadows and torchlight, rotten wooden stairwells, keys, locked doors and simple puzzles. But while it's clearly rickety and derivative in some respects, *Fatal Frame* is smart and fresh in others.

There are no weapons in the mansion; the only defence the player has is a camera. Using it shifts the view into firstperson perspective, and lets nimble users capture both the benign ghosts whose presence is atmospheric (but largely irrelevant), and the aggressive, somewhat more malevolent spirits. As the adventure progresses and the ghosts become stronger, so the player must locate more effective types of film and upgrade the camera with special attacks.

Naturally, it doesn't quite work. Each fight follows the same pattern: run away, switch to firstperson, take as many pictures as you can before the ghosts get too close, switch back to thirdperson, and repeat. Tedious, but in the same way that *Biohazard* fans argue that Capcom's unwieldy rotational control system adds to the tension, *Fatal Frame* fanboys might consider the fumbling panic dynamic here adds to the horror. It certainly adds to the claustrophobia, and as the game progresses, that sense of confinement – the mansion is small, and you backtrack often – increases in proportion to the aggression of the enemy spirits.

The story is absorbing, particularly the intelligent prologue which sees the player controlling Miku's brother in a black and white flashback. The use of cassettes as a narrative method works well too, but the scraps of paper around the mansion are too frequent and written in staid, clinical English. They're a clumsy, old skool narrative method in a game that sometimes feels ahead of its time.

It's not that *Fatal Frame*'s basic survival horror mechanic is futuristic, but that the photo centrepiece twists it in a subtle, clever way, on much more than a 'different weapon' level. It clearly doesn't have the budget, brand name or production values of some of its rivals, but, purely in terms of intelligence, it may be closer to the future of the genre.

Edge rating: Seven out of ten

DDR MAX: Dance Dance Revolution 6th Mix

Format: **PlayStation2** Publisher: **Konami** Developer: **In-house** Price: **¥6,800 (£36)** Release: **Out now (Japan), Q1 2003 (UK)**

Stand in the centre of the dance mat. Watch the screen. Step on the arrows when the game tells you to. Conceptually, physically tracing pre-ordained patterns in time with too-kitsch pop doesn't sound like the most intense gaming experience. Besides, you abhorred Cartoons' 'Witch Doctor', the idea of a techno stop-start version of 'Somewhere over the Rainbow' doesn't interest you, and nor does the news that 2 Unlimited's 'Twilight Zone' is back from the grave. You are *not* in the mood for dancing to 'I'm in the Mood for Dancing', and it doesn't matter.

Regardless of personal preferences, Konami's *DDR MAX* soundtrack is near perfect. The music is as ridiculous as some of the titles imply – 'www.Blonde Girl', 'Bye Bye Baby Balloon' – but it is always enthusiastic, always involving. There's a significant shift away from the monotonous stepping that dominates the recently released *Dancing Stage Konamix*, and towards dumb bouncy pop. And while the musical range is broad, the variation in stepping style and structure between levels and songs is just as impressive, and more easily observed.

Versions of *DDR* prior to *6th Mix* rated the difficulty of songs on a scale from one to nine feet. *MAX* dispenses with that, a spider diagram appraising different aspects of each tune. It allows players to focus on parts of the game they enjoy most – rapid sequences of arrows, double-arrow jumping, obscenely high beat rates – or to concentrate on weaknesses. While other iterations grind you into submission, *DDR MAX* encourages you to learn. There is always a song that's just manageable and always one just out of reach. Frustration is tempered by exhilaration, magnified by exhaustion.

And that's its beauty. Even when you're out of breath, it's hard to walk away because there are Cs so nearly shifting into Bs, then turning into As and beyond. Records are kept and displayed on the selection screen. Practice makes Perfects, Perfects make AAAs, AAAs make Showoffs, Showoffs go to the arcade, fall over, come back home and practise some more. Streams of arrows that looked impossible now fall with ease, but there's so much further to go. It's epic, hypnotic and rewarding. It is, at its limits, one of the most intense experiences the PS2 has to offer, and deserves attention and respect commensurate with that.

Edge rating: Eight out of ten









The game can be played at three levels: light, standard and heavy. Most players will begin on the baby setting, which still provides a challenge









Practice mode allows you to take the song bar by bar, and concentrate on sections you find particularly difficult. Songs can also be slowed down, which comes in handy for the 300bpm 'MAX 300' number

Ice ice baby

As well as maintaining the syncopated steps and occasional changes of pace introduced since *Euromix*, *DDR MAX* introduces the freeze arrow, a drawn out step that forces the player to keep their foot on the pad for longer than an instant. Failing to do so won't break the combo – the sequence of beats you've matched with either Great or Perfect results – but it will harm your score. Freestylers who feel restricted by the forced movements can switch freezes off in the options.

Sega Soccer Slam

V-Rally 3

Format: **Game Boy Advance** Publisher: **Infogrames** Developer: **Fernando Velez and Guillaume Dubail** Price: **£30** Release: **Out now** Previously in **E**107

Graphically, *V-Rally 3* impresses even if the framerate suffers (though not so much as to affect the feeling of speed). And while the car handling is naturally basic (on gravel the sense of drifting is restrained, although opting for the chase cam view tends to accentuate this effect) this remains an engaging drive – undoubtedly one of the most convincing racers on Nintendo's handheld system.

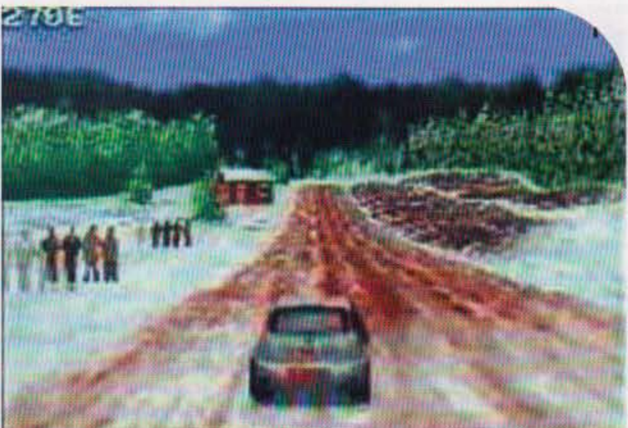
However, it's also one of the easiest. Most should power through the 2WD championship on their first attempt almost unchallenged. Once in the 4WD class things get trickier (and noticeably faster) but by no means as frustrating as the game's V-Rally Cross mode. Here you face three opponents with no consideration for your position on the circuit. Care to guess who comes off worse at every encounter thus making it seemingly impossible to qualify for the higher difficulty rounds?

Overall, the game's uneven nature implies a rushed development period. Elements such as the podium sequence from the main rally mode – its barrenness is completely at odds with the good attention to detail evident elsewhere – further reinforce this.

Edge rating: Five out of ten







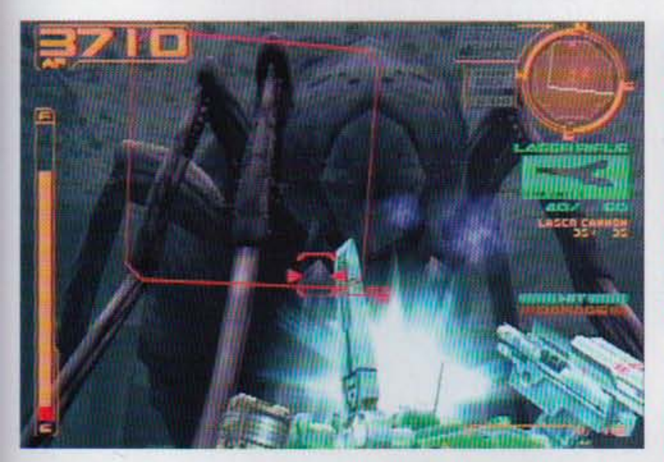


While technically brilliant, there's little doubt that with a little more time the developer could have ensured a far more involving experience than the one currently on offer. Nevertheless, it's worth checking out if only for the enjoyable nature of the game's Time Trial or multiplayer options which are the only way to ensure a balanced challenge

Fireblade

Armored Core 2: Another Age

Format: **PlayStation2** Publisher: **Metro3D** Developer: **From Software** Price: **£40** Release: **July 12**





Although it's not radically different to its immediate predecessor (or indeed its immediate successor), the game's mission pack structure lends it an immediacy and learning curve that might be more readily appreciated by non-fans than the original





Although *Armored Core 3* has just been released in Japan (see p92), *Armored Core 2: Another Age* has only now been granted a PAL release courtesy of publisher Metro3D. It's an update rather than an outright sequel, but it's no less desirable because of that. While *Armored Core 2* owners can load their saved games to play through 100 additional missions, new players can enjoy them on a standalone basis. And although there's no Arena mode, multiplayer options are extended as compensation.

Mech customisation is again at the heart of the *Armored Core* experience, with time spent in the garage rewarded by an easier route through missions. Indeed the learning curve is more measured than the original *AC2*, offering a gentle introduction, while maintaining the satisfyingly unforgiving difficulty levels of later encounters. The range of objectives also preserves the variety that characterised the series' last PS2 outing, including simple destruction, bomb disposal and escort missions, with some surprises thrown in.

The most noticeable difference, though, is that *Another Age* is more direct and immediate than its predecessor, which is probably a good thing.

Edge rating: Eight out of ten

Sega Soccer Slam

Format: **GameCube** Publisher: **Sega** Developer: **Black Box/Visual Concepts** Price: **$50 (£34)** Release: **Out now (US), TBC (UK)**









The virtual eye can be zoomed right out, but this dilutes the action, making the relative emptiness of the pitch all too obvious. Elsewhere, the Turbo button allows for a finite speed-burst, similar to other temporary powerups such as flames or metallic shields. The 'Killer Kick' should remain your primary aim though

In the wake of World Cup fever, perhaps *Sega Soccer Slam* is a misnomer – this is no *Winning Eleven*. Instead, the pitch is more *Speedball*, as players take charge (individually or collectively) of three team members, plus a goalkeeper of the automatic or manual type. Expect the usual controls, with the unique selling point of a 'punch' feature. Violence is often as effective as skill, and play is augmented by moves such as the 'Killer Kick': Charge the power bar through exceptional footwork, then unleash an assault on the goal, replete with directable crosshairs and 'Bullet Time' slow-motion. Satisfying, if a touch unnecessary.

The comedic nature is echoed in the visuals, particularly where racial stereotypes are concerned. Commentary is also hackneyed, but serves its purpose for such a farcical title. And for once, the camera is fully maneouvrable, allowing for near or distant viewpoints.

With unlockable arenas and game modes, there is much to enjoy, especially in the fourplayer game. That said, once the (admittedly) riotous fun wears off, the remaining game is staid, paling in comparison to its more 'serious' cousins. As stated, don't be fooled – this is no football game.

Edge rating: Six out of ten

Fireblade

Format: **PlayStation2** Publisher: **Midway** Developer: **Kuju Entertainment** Price: **£40** Release: **Out now**

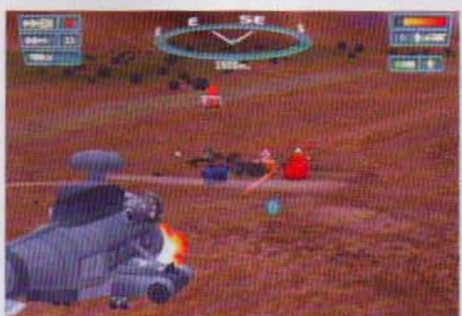
Developers of air combat games have reached an impasse. Put bluntly: we've seen it all before. Both *Top Gun* and *Ace Combat 4* proved that there's little innovation in the modern console flight game. But helicopters have always offered something a little more exotic. Remember the eye-patch? Remember the desert cave? Remember the pulsing synthesised theme tune? Yes, ever since *Airwolf* helicopter videogames have provided something more imaginative.

Indeed, *Fireblade* introduces a number of gadgets to prevent things becoming too stale. A cloaking device provides stealth opportunities on certain missions. A zoom function allows for easier targeting with the weapons assigned to the L1 button. And there's a thermal camera for spotting distant enemies. It's even possible to disable enemy vehicles by surrounding them with a wave of EMP. All combine to deliver an experience Stringfellow Hawke would be proud of.

Crucially, the handling has been implemented well, and once strafing and manoeuvring are mastered the game becomes very satisfying. The stealth aspects feel a little tagged on, but *Fireblade* is an enjoyable, though not groundbreaking, experience.

Edge rating: Six out of ten









***Fireblade*'s arcade leanings are underlined by floating pickups and vibrant explosions. The game excels when there's plenty of destruction to be meted out, but it falls short when a softly, softly approach is required. Gadgets, such as the thermal camera (left), add variety to the combat**

the making of...

Spacewar!

While Halo may be one of the best videogames of all time, played on a $200 console, spare a thought for Steve Russell's creation – the first ever videogame ran on a $120,000 piece of hardware. **Edge** goes back in time, to the summer of 1962

Original format: **PDP -1**
Publisher: **N/A**
Developer: **Steve Russell**
Origin: **US**
Original release date: **1962**

It is a computer lab as we know all computer labs to be: whitewashed concrete-block walls; linoleum floor; a long row of blinds that are, of course, always closed. A group of long-haired coders in their mid-20s are gathered around the bright light of the screen. It's 3am, but no one wants to go home: they're all clamouring to play next. The two lucky enough to have the controls are holding their arms up, their elbows sore with repetitive strain injury from playing the game. "No!" they shout. "Turn! Fire! Argh…"

It's a familiar scene – *Quake III*, you might be thinking; *Halo* perhaps, or even a game of *Asteroids* – except Marilyn Monroe is still alive, aerial photography has just picked up Soviet cruise missile bases on the shores of Cuba, and it has been barely a year since President John F Kennedy swore – to the disbelief of a nation – that by the end of the decade the US will put a man on the moon. This is 1962, the dawn of the space race, and we're doing our bit for the sci-fi dreams of a nation: playing *Spacewar!*, the first ever videogame.

You thought the Xbox was bulky, but the engine of this game is not console- or even PC-sized, but a PDP-1, a computer whose banks would fill a room. The PDP is a gift, recently delivered from Digital Equipment Corporation to the MIT Research Lab for Electronics, in the hope that MIT might invent novel uses for the new technology. Well, these first-generation hackers in their mid-20s have certainly found something to do with their spare processor time. The game they're playing, a proto-*Asteroids* in which two ships wheel around a blazing sun firing photon torpedoes, against a pixel-perfect starfield (this is MIT, after all), has kept them here until 3am for the last week.

Let's say it again: the first ever videogame. For all those lost hours spent with Mario, Solid Snake, terrorists, counter-terrorists, jumping from platform to platform, cutting your lap-times, shooting through rifle-scopes – you can blame this game.

In fact, if you like, you can blame it on science fiction. It was the novels of EE 'Doc' Smith that did it. The three intrepid, cylinder-head robot-flick-loving, Schwinn-riding children of the '50s at the heart of the *Spacewar!* phenomenon – Wayne Witaenem, **Martin Graetz**, and **Stephen 'Slug' Russell** – were big fans of the Doc's 'Skylark' and 'Lensman' series. It was an apt inspiration: Smith's formulaic sci-fi paperbacks pre-empted the wave-upon-wave relentlessness of *Space Invaders* ("Well done Earthling… now do battle with our super forces") by over a decade.

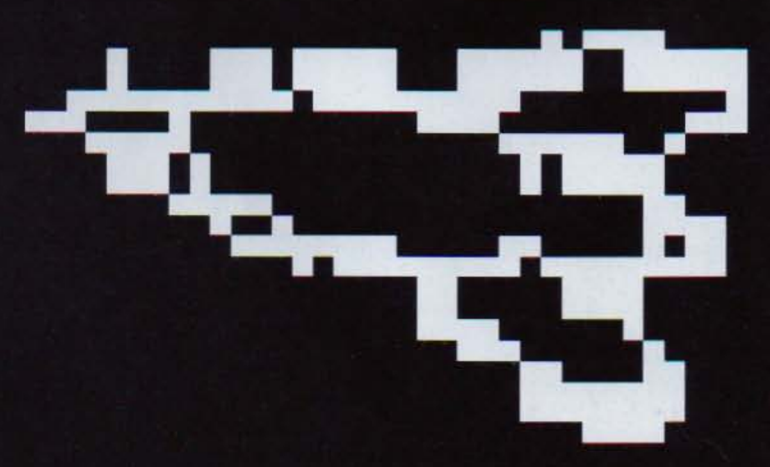
Powerful forces

"Doc Smith was not Shakespeare," Russell says, of his reading habits at the time. "The heroes went around the universe being chased by the villains, the heroes defeated the villains just in time – then at the start of the next book, the villains turned out to be just the wimpy assistants for the incredibly powerful forces of evil. And then in the next book… The colours were bright, and there was lots of action." At the time, though, as Russell remembers, computers couldn't have been further from such fast-paced sci-fi action. "With most of the other









computers, you had to have an engineer who understood the power sequence: turn on a power supply, then another power supply, make sure they started right, there was no smoke, then a third power supply. You had to be elected trustworthy just to turn it on. And the way you used a computer was, you punched a bunch of IBM cards with your program, and you submitted them to a good-sized bureaucracy. And in the fullness of time you would get back a pile of white paper." The new PDP-1, however, was something else. "The PDP-1 didn't have a high-speed printer, and it didn't have a bureaucracy. It had a typewriter and a paper tape reader and a paper tape punch. In a sense it was the first personal computer, in that you could sit down and flip the power switch, and you could start using it."

It was new enough to make you put down your Doc Smith novels and take note. "Long before the PDP-1 was up and running," remembers Graetz, "Wayne, Slug and I had formed a sort of ad-hoc committee on what to do with it." The trio decided that the ideal demo program should not only tax the resources to the limit, and be different every time; it should also be active, even pleasurable: in short, it should be a game. Graetz remembers their first conversation. "Wayne said, 'Look you need action, and you need some kind of skill level. It should be a game where you have to control things moving around on the scope like, oh, spaceships.' '*Spacewar!*' we shouted."

Primordial soup

Nineteen-sixty-two, the space race, Doc Smith, long hair, spaceships chasing each other across the galaxy. It may have been a dark and stormy night; lightning might have flashed when research assistant 'Slug' Russell first flicked that PDP-1 switch; or it might not. Either way, out of this electronic primordial soup, in this dark research laboratory, arose a lumbering monster of a way to kill time. The idea leapt from their paperbacks onto the curved green screen in a flash.

Or would have, if Russell could be bothered to do anything about it. True to the form he was busy establishing, Russell had the hacker's reluctance to actually do any work, as Graetz recalls. "Russell, never one to do something when there was an alternative, begged off for one reason or another." One excuse was there were no sine-cosine routines for the PDP-1. Then a colleague, Alan Kotok, came back from a trip all the way to DEC headquarters with the sine-cosine paper tapes, and Russell had no more excuses. "So I finally sat down and worked at it," Russell remembers. Working with the restrictions of the PDP-1's 4,096 words of 18bits each, "I wrote the space with no gravity, with the two ships and some controls."

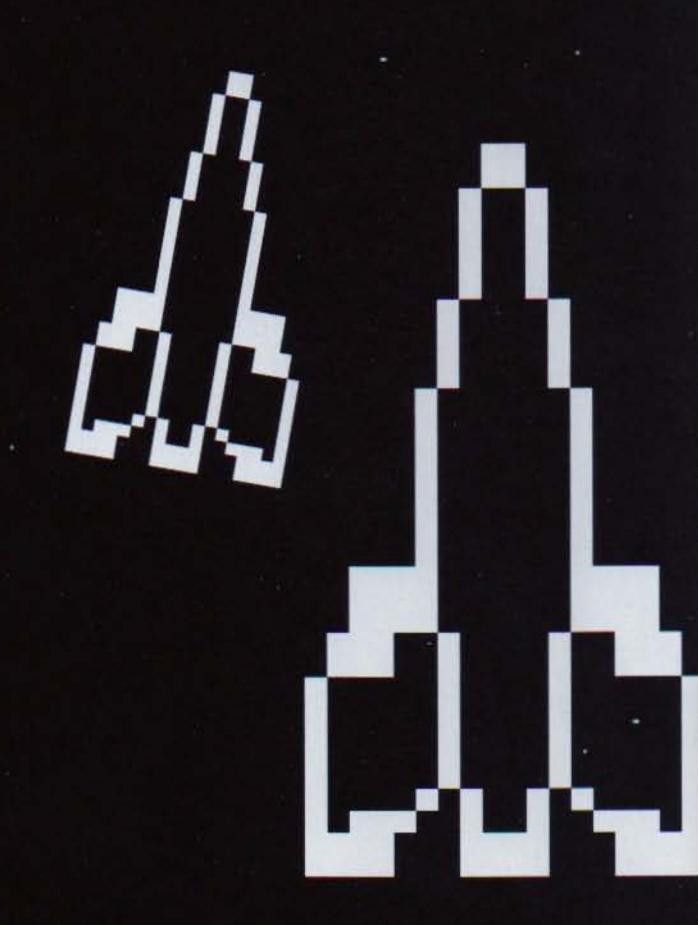
With no point of reference and no friction, the two ships skidded somewhat surreally across the screen. "We tried it," says Russell, "and decided it wasn't as satisfying as it could be." A colleague, Dan Edwards, got Newtonian gravity working around the pixellated sun, and another, Pete Sampson, wrote a program called 'Expensive Planetarium'. "At the time," remembers Russell, "the trend was for 'expensive this', 'expensive that'. 'Expensive Desk Calculator' was a desk calculator, but it used a $120,000 computer instead. 'Expensive Planetarium' had a star display that was realistic, and used a real star map."

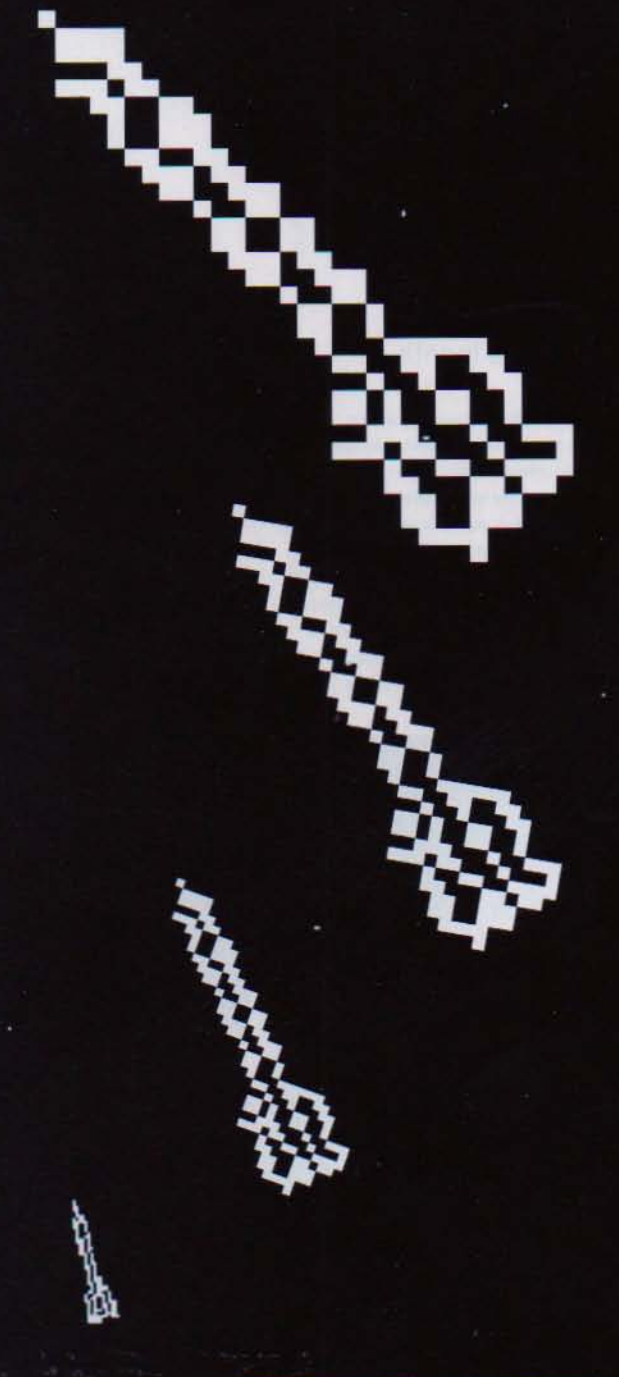
For controls, they rigged up a bank of 18 switches. But, as Russell remembers,





One fat rocket, one thin. *Spacewar!* still proved addictive enough to keep the boys at MIT up until 3am. A pattern which many **Edge** readers may have followed ever since





"There were two serious disadvantages: one, they clicked, so if you heard the other player going click, click, click, you figured they were out of torpedoes. The other disadvantage was that it was a little high, so your elbows got tired because they were resting on the table. We rummaged around under the model railway club table and found four boxes with four push-buttons, which were used for '40s telephones. Fortunately the PDP-1 had a wire for additional input, so we wired those in."

They had it. At the command of those push-buttons, the two ships – one rounded V2 style rocket and another slimmer, meaner machine – now wheeled in a dogfight around the sun, firing photon torpedoes against a pixel-perfect starfield. A hyperspace function was added, so at any moment the panicked pilot could hit a button and take his chances against rematerialising in the centre of the sun. There was even a power-move, the gravity slingshot, in which the skilled player could double his or her speed in a tight flick around the sun. The screen, a tiny box with a curved green glass front, was phosphor based: each pixel lit up in brilliant green before fading slowly through yellow into black. All the ships, stars, and photon torpedoes had gentle yellow analogue trails, tracing out these young men's hopes – and their whole generation's yearning – to project themselves into outer space.

In the years to come, a fellow MIT regular named Nolan Bushnell will create a stand-alone version of *Spacewar!*: a curvy supermodel of an arcade cabinet to be called *Computer Space*. That will flop, so the company he will found – a garage startup called Atari – will make some modifications, turn it into a singleplayer game, and call it *Asteroids*. "They actually hit on the thing which made it viable as a commercial game," remembers Russell now, "which is they put in a piece of unrealism which made it much easier to learn. They put viscosity in space."

But before *Asteroids* was fun, *Spacewar!* was fun. "The thing that pleased me the most," says Russell, "was that the idea was so contagious. A lot of people, ten or 20 at least, saw *Spacewar!* and didn't have access to the sources or were on a different machine, and figured out how to do it on other machines. And I think it was the world's most popular computer game, such as it was, for a year or two.

"It was fun. No, we didn't feel any great cosmic significance. We looked very briefly at trying to make money off it, but it turned out at the time you couldn't copyright software and you couldn't patent software. We thought about it for a week, then decided, nah, there wasn't any hope, so we gave away the sources freely."

Spacewar! is not just the first computer game, it's a landmark in any history of computing. "I was using what is considered current technology," says Russell. "The spaceships and torpedoes are in fact polymorphic objects. It was object-oriented code." You can play a Java version of *Spacewar!* at http://agents.www.media.mit.edu/groups/el/projects/spacewar/ The game runs on a PDP-1 simulator, and Russell thinks it's the oldest program still running on the original source code.

"We looked very briefly at trying to make money off it, but it turned out at the time you couldn't copyright software. We thought about it, then decided there wasn't any hope"

The game was so good, it became a problem. The log-books from the PDP-1 still record the names of AI luminaries such as Marvin Minsky alongside whole blocks in the evenings and throughout the weekends marked simply, '*Spacewar!*'. The game was officially designated the lowest priority in use of the machine, which drove the MIT students and workers to play late into the night. Which is where we found them.

We could interrupt them. True to the form of the science fiction that inspired them, we could tap them on the shoulder, give them advice, change the game – "Call it *Quake*. Make it 3D." – set whole chains of alternate histories cascading into motion. But the history they built for us hasn't disappointed, has it? Game after game after game, all descended from this one. A trail of sprites and polygons and explosions leading across 40 years back to *Spacewar!*, like the fading yellow ghosts on an old curved phosphor screen.



Spacewar! eventually came to the MB Vectrex and benefited from its vector display. Obviously, PDP-1s are not easy to come by – these images are emulations of the original

RESET

Where yesterday's gaming goes to have a lie down

reload

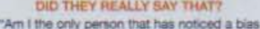
Examining gaming history from **Edge**'s perspective, five years ago this month



Issue 48, August 1997

"It's huge, terrifying, worth millions of dollars, and if you're not careful it'll chew you up and spit you out." No, **Edge** isn't talking about the dinosaur that adorned **E**48's *Lost World*-themed cover, but the ever-expanding corporate side of the games industry that inspired a miniature startup rebellion. 'The Great Escape' looked at why Meier left MicroProse for Firaxis, why Molyneux left Bullfrog for Lionhead, and what drove Porter, Hall and Romero to form Ion Storm. (According to Romero, iD didn't allow for a social life: "You can get a lot accomplished if you live at work. It's not for me.")

Playing come-down five years ago were a prescreen focus on LucasArts' majestic *Masters of Teras Kasi*, and an interview with 3Dfx's marketing and developer relations people which made Codeshop look like a disco rave. In fact, numedia contained the neatest glimpse of the future: a short review of the UK's first PAL-compatible DVD player, which could "handle NTSC discs as well as PAL movies," and all without a hint of PS2 green-screen. Nice, but **E**48 was significant for another reason. Slipping quietly in between the hype and the dinosaurs, *GoldenEye* got a nine.



DID THEY REALLY SAY THAT?

"Am I the only person that has noticed a bias towards the PC in your magazine?"

Letter writer Gary Pearson possibly was; everyone else was much too busy noticing **Edge**'s bias towards the PlayStation, Saturn and N64

DID EDGE REALLY SAY THAT?

"Rare is hoping that Conker's colourful world will appeal to the younger N64 audience" A lack of adult-orientated prescience is hardly **Edge**'s fault, but amusing nonetheless

TESTSCREENS (AND RATINGS)

GoldenEye (N64, 9/10); *Time Crisis* (PS, 8/10); *X-Com: Apocalypse* (PC, 9/10); *Yuke Yuke Trouble Makers* (N64, 8/10); *Atlantis* (PC, 6/10); *Ballblazer Champions* (PS, 6/10); *Hexen 64* (N64, 5/10)



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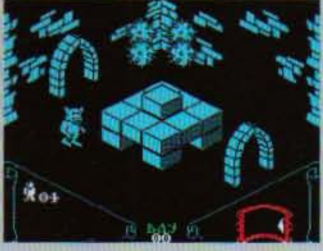
6

1. *Banjo-Kazooie*, subject of banjo/kazoo bitching in **E**47 2. *GoldenEye*, the only other game that should have scored a ten 3. E3 booth babes, significantly hairier back in '97 4. Erin and Chris Roberts, Tony Zurovec. Smooth 5. "Spacecraft designs score high for originality," lied the *I War* preview 6. The layout for "The Great Escape": fluoro-*DDR* meets acid headache

pixelperfect

The industry's favourites from yesteryear. This month, Jon Ritman, creator of Match Day and Head over Heels, remembers being very impressed





Knight Lore was so good that it was held back to avoid damaging sales of other games

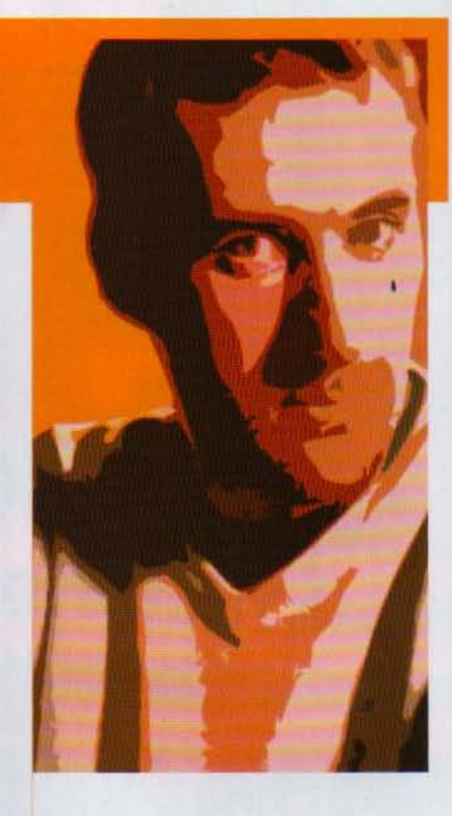
I was handing over the final copy of *Match Day* to Ocean's boss when he gave me a posh looking cassette case and told me I should take a look. Later, while visiting developers Design Design, we fired up the Spectrum to take a look. Present were several very competent programmers and I'm pretty sure every one of their jaws hit the floor.

For me it was everything I had ever dreamed of in a game. Disney quality graphics in a 3D environment, a game with consistent physics throughout that allowed the player to move things around, stand on them and even pile them up. I know that doesn't sound much today but in the early '80s it was way beyond anything I had ever seen.

Little did we realise that not only had the creators of this masterpiece made a major breakthrough in gaming but also that they had done so a year earlier and had been brave enough to hold the game back on the basis that it would harm sales of their other games, a brilliant business decision. The game was *Knight Lore* by Ultimate Play The Game.

FAQ

Fin McGechie
director, Mucky Foot



McGechie's first break came in the shape of a graphics position at Bullfrog, working on conversions of *Populous* and *Syndicate*. After graduating to joint lead artist on *Theme Park* and then lead artist on *Magic Carpet*, he left Bullfrog to co-found Mucky Foot. Its next release, *Blade 2*, is due out at Christmas.

What was the first videogame you played?
I would have to go for *Spacewar!*.

What was the first computer/games machine you owned?
The exceptional paddle-controlled Binatone home entertainment system. It might still be in the attic.

What was the first thing you ever created for a computer or console?
A series of random text adventures on the Spectrum consisting of about four rooms each. I decided to stop as I couldn't play them because I knew what to do.

What was your first job in the industry, and what was the first thing you ever designed?
I started as a conversion artist at Bullfrog. My first job if I remember correctly was to work on the *Two Tribes* title screen for the SNES.

What's your favourite game ever, and why?
It has to be *3D Ant Attack*. Not only does it hold many fond memories but also it was just so much better than many of the games around at the time – not to mention a lot of stuff coming out now. I still enjoy a run around on it now.

What's the first game you look for when you walk into an arcade?
I still keep an eye out for *Spacewar!* but I usually have a better chance of finding *Rolling Thunder*.

What's your favourite book, album and film of all time?
I can only think of four books that I have read, but John Wayne's biography was a good read. Album: no idea. Probably something classical – Strauss or Mozart. Film: purely for the excitement it caused when I saw it and the effect it had after I had seen it I would go for 'Star Wars'.

Which Website do you most regularly visit?
Cinesape.com. Latest movies and a useful resource for our next project, *Blade 2*.

What game would you most like to have worked on?
There are no games that I wish I'd worked on. If the game was good then I wouldn't want to change it, and if it was bad then I wouldn't want to have worked on it. There are games that I would like to do up-to-date versions of though.

Of all the games you've been involved in in the past, what's your favourite and why?
Theme Park. It was a very exciting time for me at Bullfrog; everybody was focused, there were no politics and everyone was keen and really wanted to succeed. I probably learned more during the development of that game than I have since.

What stage is your current project at?
Our current project is *Blade 2*, and we have around four months left.

"I'd like to see developers get a little more credit for what they bring to the table. After all, without them the industry has nothing"

What was the last game you played and what did you think of it?
I'm currently working my way through *Medal of Honor*, once again. Whenever I play a firstperson shooter I find the AI fails massively. I'm still waiting to play a FPS that can compete with the online experience that I get from games such as *Counter-Strike*.

How many hours a week do you actually spend playing games?
Adding it up it works out about around 30–35 hours (not work related) a week, and yes I should get out more.

What aspect of it do you think will impress players the most?
We're particularly proud of the 360-degree combat system we've incorporated.

What new development in videogames would you most like to see?
I'd like to see the actual developers get a little more credit for what they bring to the table. After all, without them the industry has nothing.

What disappoints you about the industry?
It has to be the lack of confidence in this country to develop and expand. Being a small independent company it's not the easiest place to survive. If the UK industry doesn't watch out we'll all be swallowed up by foreign investors, and then we'll be asking the same questions as the film industry: "What happened?"

What do you enjoy most about working in the videogame industry?
The enthusiasm and talent of the people that you get to work with on the development side. You can't help but be happy about it and if you can avoid the suits then it's a great industry to be in.

Whose work do you most admire?
I've worked with so many people I admire and respect that I can't name them all, so I won't.

Videogames: Art or Entertainment? (Discuss)
It's a combination of both art and entertainment. People pay money for a game to entertain them and be visually pleasing. It may not be regarded as 'fine' art but it is an art form nonetheless. Anyone who says different deserves a punch.

What pleases/disappoints you about the way videogames are discussed in both the specialist and mainstream press?
I'm pleased that that it's now more socially acceptable to admit you play games. As for disappointment, that would be the fact that magazines are falling more towards the fashion of games and gaming culture, leaning more towards the lifestyle side rather than telling us about the games themselves.

inbox

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In games where narrative and character are all but absent, or games which have desexualised cartoon characters or children as their central protagonists, my (homo)sexuality is largely irrelevant, and certainly less problematic than my gender or skin colour might be if I were black or female.

It is an entirely different matter in those games, such as *Metal Gear Solid*, *GTAIII*, or any of the more traditional RPGs, in which character and narrative are an integral part of the game play. Here, there is an implicit assumption that the player, often like the game's protagonist, is white, heterosexual and male. For the player who cannot conform to this notion of the 'ideal' gamer, the end result is at best irritation, and at worst, exclusion. This kind of heterosexism is often insidious, even where a character's heterosexuality is not central to the game, as is the case of Solid Snake in *MGS*. Yet, *MGS* still subtly rewards the player thoughtful (or heterosexually male) enough to stare at Meryl Silverburgh's breasts.

However, occasionally gay gamers can subvert the status quo and reappropriate a character as one of their own, as any gay man who has played *Shenmue* and followed Ryo Hazuki around, looking for sailors, will attest. That the open-minded gamer might question Ryo's sexuality, is further reinforced by his marked discomfort with female characters such as Nozomi Harasaki, who are clearly romantically available. Lesbians and gays use the kind of narrative ambiguity present in *Shenmue* – however inadvertent – as a means of obtaining at least a shard of representation. This kind of cultural terrorism is fun, but ultimately it's more satisfying to see bona fide gay characters in a game. Unless that game is *GTAIII*.

GTAIII's depiction of gay men, even in the context of an amoral game, is downright offensive. Shahid Ahmad [see **E**110] applauds Rockstar/Take 2 for being innovative and 'taking risks'. I'm sorry, but depicting gay men as "mincing queens" or women as prostitutes is not innovative. Third rate Hollywood films have been recycling those images for years. Is that really the best the industry can do? Furthermore, shagging a prostitute in the back of your car to increase your health points is not risk-taking. If Rockstar really want to take risks, why doesn't the character shag the prostitute, but become HIV positive because he didn't use a condom? Your health meter, instead of increasing, would slowly trickle away to nothing. Game Over. Now how funny/innovative/offensive/educational (delete as appropriate) is that?

While researching an academic paper, I talked with two gay men, who worked in the games industry, one a programmer, the other a graphic artist. Neither were 'out' at work and both said that the laddish, heterosexist culture at their companies made them disinclined to do so. If you need any further proof of this laddish culture, take a look at the advertisement in **Edge** for the recruitment agency Change Ltd. A third of the advertisement's space is taken up with a cartoon depiction of Change Ltd's recruitment consultants, rendered as leather clad Croftesque women, draped suggestively over each other in a pose that makes *Fear Effect 2* look like an episode of 'Ellen'. Perhaps it's no surprise then, that not one of the games companies advertising for staff in **Edge** display an equal opportunities statement in their copy.

Maybe one could be kind and put this down to exuberant heterosexism rather than blatant homophobia, but it is not so easy to excuse Core Design in this respect. If you doubt that Core's decision to withhold imagery of Lara Croft from the gay press is anything other than homophobic, consider the reaction that would have occurred had they similarly refused to cooperate with a black or asian publication: "We don't really want Lara at this point to come across as an icon for the black community... it's not something she would do," etc.

There may be some hope for minority gamers, though. If, as Ahmad suggests, improved middleware will allow smaller, yet still profitable, production runs, it's the gaming minorities who might benefit. Developers could produce games targeted specifically at gay or other minority gamers, the games industry equivalent of art hous cinema, or Channel 4, if you will. I'm not sure, however, that ghetto gaming is the answer. How much more inclusive, (and risk taking, Rockstar), i would be to include lesbian and gay game characters, as television and film already do, in the mainstream. Diversity in the mainstream is the answer, not separatism in the ghetto(s).

As a footnote, you missed the scandal about the gay bonus Easter egg in *Sim Copter*, the product of a disaffected programmer, who objected to the company's decision to use big breasted, thigh-length boot wearing women as models for the game's bonuses. As a result, he made a few changes. For one egg, it was Speedo clad kissing gay men, rather than boot-clad women, who emerged. They'd even happily kiss your character if you got close enough. Sadly, this political statement cost the programmer his job. The models, by all accounts, ended up working fo Change Ltd. Plus ça change...
Paul Ryan

Somewhere inside my casual 'gaymer' head, I've always possessed and perpetually suppressed a desire to add my thruppence ha'penny's worth to the minority target argument. Bizarrely, it was never intended to lend a voice to ; trade magazine, but rather to attack the rabidly heterosexual fanboy game mags that make such an issue of denial.

The games market, just like most things in life, relies on the heterosexual presumption. It's far easier that way as your article points out: the bottom line is that most people consider themselves straight and therefore provide the broadest market. Such 'heterosexism' is merely a fact of life for homosexuals and is something that can be addressed by raising the gay profile (and thanks to your article for doing this).

The fact is that we tolerate heterosexism every day and it is neither here nor there whether the

"If Rockstar really want to take risks, why doesn't the character shag the prostitute, but become HIV positive because he didn't use a condom? Now how funny is that?"



Paul Ryan isn't very impressed with the way Take 2's hugely popular 18-certified title depicts gay men as 'mincing queens' and women as prostitutes

boys termed him 'Solid' Snake in the locker rooms or not. Further – and to add to the perennial debate – I don't play as Lara Croft because I want to be her, just as I'm sure most real world straight boys don't fancy her. If a game is playable, it's playable. I almost think that I might be more offended to be a heterosexual man and be confronted with the stereotypically 'sexy' *Dead or Alive* girls as my fantasy playmates.

Integration has always been the key, no matter whether a media genre or as a social issue. If *The Sims* is getting that just about right – and I agree, by default we are all bisexual – then there can be no harm in seeing more of it. Surely homosexuals are now media-friendly enough to ensure that my sexuality does not offend or corrupt? (There is an altogether different argument here about Section 28 and the game developers' demographics.)

Gay men are rife in life and it is very much of an oversight not to see this reflected elsewhere. Like life too, though, sexuality can be pretty incidental to the plot. However coy Core might be, I don't believe it has allowed Lara to ever clearly delineate her own persuasions, which may well be the secret to her gain of lesbian respect.

My attack was not on the market – where, just like any medium it will grow beyond the comfort of a fail-safe audience – but on the marketing. I can absolutely guarantee that many of the 14-year-old straight white male gamers that buy fanboy game mags will become 34-year-old gay white male gamers with the pink pound in their pocket.
Ed JG Cooper

"Trade magazine"? "Trade magazine"? Anyway...

I've just had a read through your article 'Minority Report' in **E**110. I'm a 21-year-old gay guy, and unlike most of the homosexual population I'm a hardcore gamer. It's a shame that there has been little research into gay people who play games. I know plenty of homos who play games, some very casually, some moderately and only one other who's into them at the obsessive levels that I am, what with me owning almost every mainstream console ever built (excluding the NES, skipped that one for some reason, and PlayStation2, Xbox and GameCube due to lack of funds) devoting all my spare cash to my games collection, as well as my spare time and space under the TV.

That seems to be pretty much the way things are with all my straight friends as well.

That being said, I would like to see more homosexuality in videogames (and not just used as a shameful publicity stunt to attract teenage boys). Aside from *The Sims* (I've had great fun converting Mortimor Goth away from Bella, among other bizarre love situations), there do seem few other examples in games. I have noticed a few however.

It's pretty obvious that Eagle in *Capcom vs SNK 2* is gay, what with winning quotes like "You may try and seduce me, but you'll fail for reasons I'd rather not elaborate on," among others, but there are Internet rumours, apparently stemming from Capcom, that Zangief plays for the other side. Less obvious to the untrained eye is Voldo in *Soul Calibur*. His whole devotion to Verci, as well as his costumes, and lines in his ending referring to him as his 'sweet master' and claiming that he's found eternal bliss, reunited with his master for all eternity in the empty void. It seems very similar to the modern day 'master/sub' situation, where one man is the 'master' and the other is a 24-hour slave, having their freedom and dignity taken from them, and for some unknown reason get a perverse thrill from it all.

Also, I've picked up a few suspect things about *Shenmue*'s very own Ryo Hazuki. From the way he shuns most female company and affection (to which people argue that he is too concerned about his quest, which I counter argue 'he seems to have plenty of time to pet kittens, practise in car parks, buy toys and play arcade machines'), had some interesting male bonding scenes with both Gui Zhang and Ren, avoided a near kiss from Shenhua, and most importantly (to me at least, from a character development point of view) continuously avoid Fangmai's questions about girls in *Shenmue II*:

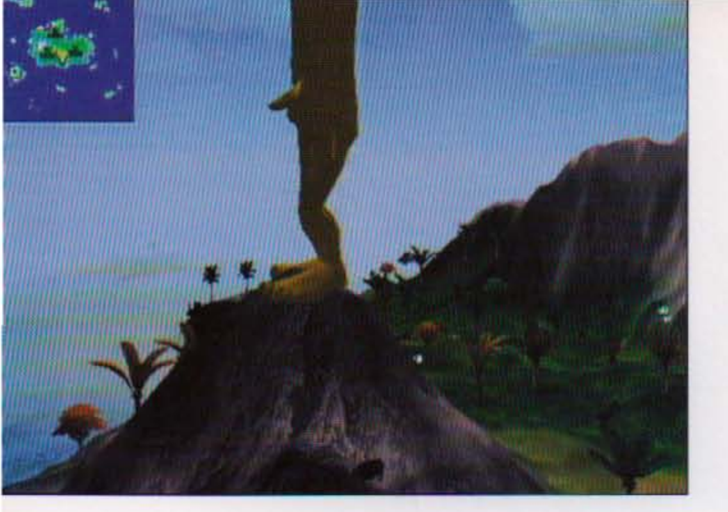
F: Ryo, what do you think of Xiuying?
R: I find her difficult.
F: Oh, I didn't think you were so fussy with girls.
R: I see.
F: Oh, I didn't realise...
R: Oh boy...

Admittedly, you do get the option in those conversations to choose his opinions. Did Sega-AM2 deliberately leave the game open ended to shape Ryo how you want him to be? Or did something get lost in the translation? It's well known that the Japanese are more tolerant about what they put in their games and cartoons. One of the main female characters in *Shenmue II* (Yuan) was allegedly male in the original, but had the voice changed. A lot probably gets lost in the translation via America, due to its intolerance and bigotry (land of the free?). The cartoon 'Sailor Moon' featured two homosexual lovers as its main baddies during one season, but upon translation into English one was given a sex change. The Pokémon cartoon also had some episodes banned for a while in the US, and it's painfully obvious that there is something up with Team Rocket's James, what with the constant transvesticism almost everytime they wear disguises.

Hopefully as the world becomes a more tolerant place, we'll see more games featuring homosexuals, let's just hope America gets its act together and stop censoring things so harshly.
Scott Pearce

I am not so happy about is something everyone seams to have decided to keep pretty quiet. At the same time as buying the GameCube I also bought a thirdparty (Tournament) S-video cable for £15. When I got home and plugged everything in, I had no picture. Panic. I switched to the normal video signal and instead I got a terrible washed out image. I changed to Nintendo's own standard cable and got full colour back. Thinking it was a problem with the cable, I purchased a

"It's pretty obvious that Eagle in Capcom vs SNK 2 is gay, but there are Internet rumours, apparently stemming from Capcom, that Zangief plays for the other side"



Kevin Cockburn feels the original caption to the image shown here (E110, p103) is an indication that Edge views sex as a dirty act. Far from it...

second S-video cable this time from MadCatz and at a more reasonable £8. The result was exactly the same.

Thinking, and worrying that it could be something to do with the console, I then phoned Nintendo. A very nice man kindly informed me that European GameCubes do not in fact support S-video out, and he didn't know why.

It seems pretty poor that this has not been made clear, either in the manual or even the Website, and that people like myself who wished for the quality that S-video gives, are free to buy such cables from high street retailers only to discover that they are useless and they are out of pocket to boot.

Nintendo should advise retailers better so that people are not able to buy something like this that does not work in the first place. They also need to explain themselves to the public so that we in Europe don't feel like second rate gamers again.
Jasper Manchipp

Well, GC does support RGB (the N64 didn't) which is a better quality signal (despite arguments to the contrary in most mags during the SNES days). But you're right, retailers should know better than to sell N64 S-video cables for the GC.

Straight to the point here. I know a guy who deals heavy in computer/console and DVD piracy. I know his name, number, address and everything else. A few months back I'd had enough of him ripping my friend off so I decided to get in touch with FACT and FAST via their online 'grass' Website. I even contacted Sony Europe direct and informed it, again via its Website. To say I was surprised was an understatement.

Surprised because nothing has been done. I got an auto response email from FACT and FAST to say they would be back in touch in 48 hours and I never heard a thing from Sony. Needless to say, three months on and I've heard nothing – except that this guy is still in the money making business.

How are we to move forward on this issue if the powers at be don't do anything? It's stories like this of people getting away with it that tempt people to the dark side. Any thoughts?
Anon

Edge suggests that you ring ELSPA direct and see whether it can offer any help on what course of action to take next: 01386 830642.

After reading Ming Townsend's letter in **E**110 regarding game censorship, I feel I would like to respond. At 23 years of age, recovering from a two-year depressive episode and starting to think clearly by myself and by my own admission, I can say that I would not have liked his 'ideal' family values. In fact, I will tour the opposite of his ideals; I am glad that ideas of violence and sexuality are present to children. When did we start deciding that kids were different to us?

I don't believe kids are to be protected from issues of humanity, rather, I would have had my parents' physical protection and not the what is good and bad for me protection. I am not saying risk will not be an issue, but the same type of risk is also present for the adolescent hidden from humanity and overwhelmed when something of a magnitude threatens that 'composed' world created by parents/guardians/society (delete as applicable).

An argument based on extremes I do not want to provoke, but rather, express my own point of view, as did Ming. Do any other readers have any memories of sex as 'dirty' (something **Edge** has projected in its review of *Doshin the Giant*, where a screenshot blurb hints at dirty minds if you think sexually). Or maybe feelings of guilt when confronted with nudity/sexuality/violence around parents? Why inject such negativity into such basic feelings, are we believing we are somehow above this? Or creating people that are?

How this ties with gaming is simple. These issues aren't confined only to gaming, but are important in the collective psyche because they are undealt with. I think it is sad that dealing with it seems to be put it on a higher shelf. Kids have so much to teach adults, but rather we are blind to it by trying to teach them. We are all human, we must learn to trust ourselves, and not expect others to 'get it right' for us.
Kevin Cockburn

Although we were happy to see **E**111's coverage of the Lego Kek Powerizer Toy and the *GALIDOR™: Defenders of the Outer Dimension* game, we were disappointed to see that the latter was accredited to the wrong developer. The game on PS2, PC and GameCube is being developed by Asylum Entertainment, and the GBA version by Tiertex Design Studios. The game is scheduled for release next year.
Asylum Entertainment

Apologies for the confusion. The offending team member has since been shrunk to 15cm and will now have to face the Kek Powerizer (equipped with Evil Gorm head, naturally).

I usually enjoy Steven Poole's Trigger Happy articles, but just thought the following needed pointing out. The average bloke cannot, in any way, manage anything like normal movement carrying two assault rifles, four pistols along with the sundry ammo and other kit usually dished out in a FPS game. I don't know how fit Steven is, but if he can pull off an army assault course with two assault rifles (at 12lbs a pop) plus four pistols (at 2lbs a pop) 400 rounds of assault rifle ammo, 144 rounds of pistol ammo, bayonet, fatigues, three grenades, first aid kit, binoculars, small radio, night vision goggles and body armour then my hat can be considered to be well and truly off to him.
Iain Howe

Steven seems pretty fit. He could probably do it, you know...

"In fact, I am glad that ideas of violence and sexuality are present to children. When did we start deciding that kids were different to us?"





Furoshiki argues the amount of cheating in *PSO* highlights the difference between western and Japanese attitude to games. *SMB*: less is more?

From the forum

A selection of choice cuts from Edge-Online's discussion outlet (www.futureforums.co.uk/edge/)

Subject: **The western impulse to cheat**
Poster: **Furoshiki**
Cheat devices. Copy devices. Emulators. Walkthroughs, tips sections, secrets guides, FAQs. Up, up, down, down, left, right, start. Infinite lives. Autofire joysticks. Even those dodgy old 'slowmo' modes that blitz the 'start' button. And it's not just the devices; it's the games themselves. *Tony Hawk's 3* might be fun to clock once, but who on Earth is going to do it 14-plus times to open all the extras? No one is, they're going to get the cheat codes from their mate at school, gamefaqs.com, or Prima's 'Official Illustrated No-Fun Hand-Holding Guide'. What's more, there's a whole load of stuff that you can only unlock with the codes. Even if you did have the time and/or masochistic tendencies, you wouldn't get all of the goodies. And the (US) developers know this. They expect people to cheat. They encourage it.

I'm not knocking this at all. But there is a cultural difference in evidence here. The Japanese model, by and large, encourages hard work, curiosity, and above all, exploration. Finding all the hearts in *Zelda*, or the stars in *Mario 64*, or the 96 exits in *Mario World*. Frequently, beneficial items are yours to be found, but there's often no reward other than the pleasure of the task itself.

This would all be little more than casual observation if the Great *PSO* Culture Clash had not occurred. Don't get me wrong; it certainly wasn't a clash between Japanese and western players. It was, however, a clash between Japanese design and western gameplay ethics – or, more accurately, the lack thereof. I don't think Sonic Team could ever have envisaged the scale of cheating that erupted on the western servers. At a stroke, the whole vision is shattered, to be experienced only in locked, cliquey bouts. It's still immense fun, but not what it should have been. Not what such optimism and innovation deserved.

Is it some fundamental psychological difference from one hemisphere to another? The Japanese island mentality of the importance of honour and dignity versus a western 'by any means necessary' disregard for authority? Has this friction been caused by the Internet? The exaggerated and accelerated global exposure of vastly different cultures to one another? I don't know. But if it continues to corrupt the distribution of wholly beneficial phenomena such as *PSO* around the world, I don't like it. Not one bit.

Poster: **Eskay**
I find the whole concept of cheat cartridges amusing. People pay £40 for a shiny new game. And then another £40 for a little bit of plastic that means they don't have to play it anymore. Ever tried playing *Deus Ex* with the cheats on? You'll be bored within ten minutes guaranteed.

Subject: **Less = More**
Poster: **Gandalf**
Let's apply this basic rule to videogames. *Super Monkey Ball* is so good because it's simple. It is 'more' because it has less complexity. *Ico* is another example which shows that, in games, less is more. What are your thoughts?

Poster: **vanthal**
It's not really a case of 'less is more' – you could keep stripping features from *Ico* and *SMB* until nothing was left, and you wouldn't have a better game for it. It's more a case of simplicity being very rewarding – in terms of interface, certainly. *SMB* (not so much *Ico*) has great complexity, which is good – but this needn't mean complication. Compare with *Pro Evo Soccer*, which is undeniably complex but suffers from a complicated interface. Or, as RedEye did, compare *PES* with *Sensi Soccer* – *Sensi* delivers a complex and rewarding game through a simple interface. Of course, that simplicity was at least in part a product of a hardware restriction – the single-button joystick. Nowadays, joypads offer near-infinite permutations of control. And often, this leads to complication. *SMB* is a brave launch title, espcially given the emphasis Miyamoto and co have placed in the GC controller, because in the context of the main game, it only uses the stick (apart from the map resize, which is wholly unnecessary). A lesser developer wouldn't be able to resist throwing in some shoulder pad functions, but they'd be superfluous. What gaming has needed, and what it's now slowly starting to get, is games where complex gameplay is married to intuitive and minimalist control requirements; depth and accessibility. Sometimes you'll want or need less minimal control systems; in flight sims, for example. Flight sims remind me of how I used to see racing bikes as a boy; handles with several hand positions, complicated two-lever gear controls, and fragile components. Super Monkey Ball is a BMX: handlebar, rear brake. Go.

Subject: ***Super Monkey Ball* is a big con**
Poster: **MrPogo**
There are no monkeys in it at all. None of the characters have tails, which makes them apes, not monkeys. I'm demanding a full refund. Or not.

"I find the whole concept of cheat cartridges amusing. People pay £40 for a shiny new game. And then another £40 for a bit of plastic that means they don't have to play it anymore"


Next month



1. Doom III (PC)
2. Indiana Jones and the Emperor's Tomb (Xbox, PS2, PC)
3. Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness (PS2, PC)
4. Metroid Prime (GC)
5. Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance (PS2, Xbox, GC)
6. Legend of Zelda (GC)
7. Deus Ex II: Invisible War (PC, Xbox, PS2)
8. Crazy Taxi 3: High Roller (Xbox)
9. Tron 2.0 (PC)
10. Terminator: Dawn of Fate (Xbox, PS2)
11. Star Wars: The Clone Wars (GC, PS2)
12. TimeSplitters2 (PS2, Xbox, GC)
13. Resident Evil 0 (GC)
14. Golden Sun (GBA)
15. Andy McNab: Team SAS (Xbox)
16. StarFox Adventures (GC)
17. Star Ocean 3 (PS2)
18. Batman: Dark Tomorrow (GC, PS2, Xbox)
19. Brute Force (Xbox)
20. Super Mario Sunshine (GC)
21. Blinx: The Time Sweeper (Xbox)
22. Vexx (PS2, Xbox, GC)
23. Super Monkey Ball 2 (GC)
24. Wario World (GC)

